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THE MEGA-SUPER 3-D EFFECTS OF THE LORD OF THE RINGS PREQUEL OVERSHADOW THE MOVIE, THE REEL GUYS SAY PAGE 10

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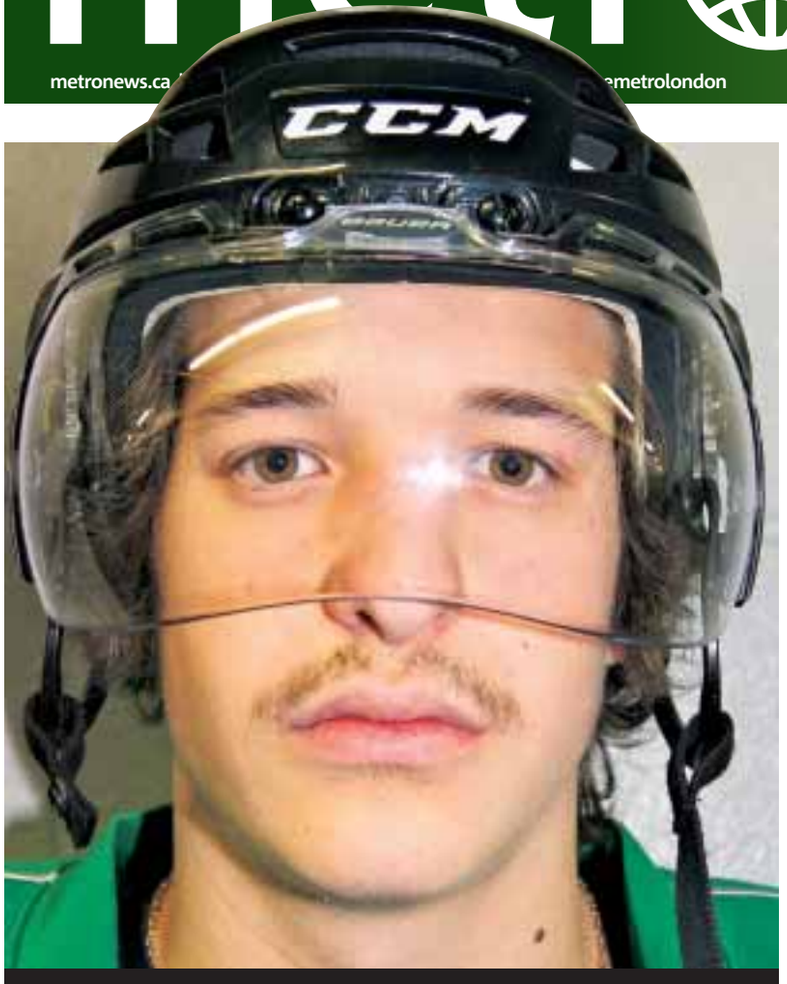

WILL HISTORY BE MADE?

Alex Broadhurst and his London Knights teammates will attempt to rewrite the franchise's history books on Friday night. If London defeats the Owen Sound Attack at Budweiser Gardens, they will own the longest winning streak in club history: 19 games. The Ontario Hockey League record is 25, set by the Kitchener Rangers in 1984.
More coverage, page 4. JOHN MATISZ/METRO

'A focus on the future'

Prosperity plan. Recommendations for struggling economy are 'beacon of hope,' officials say

ANGELA MULLINS
angela.mullins@metronews.ca

Sixty-million dollars over the next 10 years.

That's the expected cost to taxpayers of London's long-awaited road map for reviving the economy.

Officials released a synopsis of the five-point plan on Thursday. A formal presentation is planned for Tuesday's investment and economic-prosperity committee meeting.

The proposal calls for:

• Spending $40 million to buy and prepare industrial land for investors;

• Sinking $10 million into a new downtown arts centre;

• Selling London Hydro property at Horton and Ridout streets for development;

• Creating a $10-million fund to support medical research;

• Chipping about $100,000 into a one-year pilot program for retraining workers.

The plan is all "about jobs, jobs, jobs," Mayor Joe Fontana said.

Officials say the projects can be used as catalysts for investment from the private sector and other levels of government. When that happens, the net benefit to the city is estimated at $500 million, Fontana said.

"You have to be able to go to your partners and say, 'Here's London's vision, here's London's opportunities, here's where we want to go,' he said. "Finally, London has a focus on the future."

City staff are expected to present a strategy for financing the projects in January.

Even though politicians are deeply divided on many issues, Fontana said he's certain they will pull together for the cause.

"This council has made job creation and economic development, also, their priority," he said. "I am confident that every member of council believes jobs are No. 1."

Now that's a plan

Where did the ideas come from?

- Forty-nine proposals were pitched this summer after a public call for ideas. City staff narrowed the field to five through an economic analysis.

Thumbs-up to the plan, say Coun. Joe Swan and Mayor Joe Fontana.

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Creative minds

London artists-in-residence deadline Friday

The London Arts Council is developing a London artists-in-residence program. The program will fund London-based artists to develop arts projects with local teachers.

The deadline for London artists to apply to be part of the program is Friday at 4 p.m. A pilot project is planned for early 2013.

For more information, visit londonarts.ca. METRO

On the web

For more local news go to metronews.ca

New appointment

Coun. Denise Brown joins London Police Services Board

City Coun. Denise Brown has joined the London Police Services Board, replacing Mayor Joe Fontana.

Brown's appointment runs until Nov. 30, 2014, the police board said in a media release Thursday. She joins board members, Michael Deeb (chair), Jeannette Eberhard (vice-chair), Coun. Judy Bryant, and Paul Paolatto.

Brown was appointed to the board by city council, following Fontana's resignation last month after it was announced RCMP charged him with fraud-related offences. METRO

Report

London rental market remains steady

The vacancy rate in London is unchanged from last year — 3.9 per cent, according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp.'s fall rental market report. METRO

Horwath turns London spotlight on jobs, health care

Looking for solutions. NDP gathering feedback on issues across province while Queen's Park idled

ANGELA MULLINS
angela.mullins@metronews.ca

Quoted

"I'm not too proud to ask people their opinion, and that's part of what I'm doing."
Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath

Hospitals are being dealt unrealistic funding cuts … People are falling through the cracks as they transition from hospital to home care … Health-care workers are stretched to the limit.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath asked Londoners for a few thoughts on health care. She got an earful.

"There are unmet needs in this community," Peter Bergmanis, co-chair of the London Health Coalition, said during a Thursday roundtable with Horwath and London-Fanshawe MPP Teresa Armstrong. "We will never be able to cut enough to meet (current) budgetary requirements."

Horwath spent the day in London, meeting with business leaders before talking health care with industry stakeholders.

The NDP had planned to take ideas about improving health care — along with those for job creation and tackling the deficit — into the legislature this fall.

With the doors of Queen's Park closed, party members are having a series of community discussions about what's broken and how it can be fixed.

"I think we've seen failure after failure in terms of the Liberal (health-care) plan," Horwath told Metro before the roundtable. "Nobody needs to tell Londoners about the failures in health care here, when we see emergency wards bound up with ambulances a block long, we see long-term care shortages, we see home-care shortages, we see issues around CEO salaries that go through the roof and don't have any real caps on them.

"The government didn't really, I think, have a good handle on where the priorities should be in health care, and we're seeing the results of it."

What happens to the feedback will depend on what comes next at Queen's Park, Horwath said.

"We're just hoping that the government will reopen those doors so we can start doing some real work," she said. "If we don't end up back in the legislature at some point soon, if we end up in an election, then this information will be valuable to us then as well."

Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath talks during a Thursday afternoon roundtable discussion about health care at the North London Optimist Community Centre. ANGELA MULLINS/METRO

'All we want is to expose the cruel fur industry'

From left, Emily Lavender, 24, of Victoria, and Brandi Dugal, 20, of Windsor, pass out anti-fur flyers at the corner of King and Wellington streets on Thursday as part of a provincewide PETA tour. Their signs say, "Be an Angel: Don't Wear Animal Skins." JOHN MATISZ/METRO

Honking, snickering, staring.

This was the reaction from commuters at the corner of King and Wellington streets midday Thursday.

A pair of young "angels" charmed those passing by.

"Everyone has different opinions," said Emily Lavender, a 24-year-old from Victoria, and one of the two lingerie- and wing-wearing PETA demonstrators. "All we want is to expose the cruel fur industry and let people know what's going on.

"They need to know what they're buying."

Londoners from all walks of life conversed with Lavender and her fellow People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals supporter, 20-year-old Brandi Dugal from Windsor.

Some comments were unrelated — "nice ass!" — but others stopped to discuss animal rights in a constructive and meaningful fashion.

"We spoke with a man for a while who was the son of a factory egg farmer, and he was absolutely against how cruel it was," Lavender said.

The angel-themed concept is inspired by a demonstration in Asia protesting stores that sold fur, Lavender says. Holding up a sign with the phrase "Be an Angel: Don't Wear Animal Skins," helps deliver the message as well as the racy outfit, she adds.

The Forest City visit is one of four stops for the duo, having already wooed the downtown crowds in Ottawa and Hamilton. Windsor is the final checkpoint on the tour.

"There's been so much support from people," said Lavender. "Not only are they horrified to learn what happens to animals, that they're skinned alive, but when they ask our demonstrators, they're so kind."

Lavender and Dugal both have environmental studies backgrounds and are active in PETA protests, so they're used to debates from those who don't take animal rights seriously.

The mid-December weather? It's not so bad either.

"It's a little cold," Lavender said, "but nothing compared to the suffering animals endure for their entire lives on farms and slaughter houses." JOHN MATISZ/METRO

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Who said Lightning doesn't strike 11 times?

London Lightning guard DeAnthony Bowden drives past an opponent on his way to the hoop during the third quarter of a National Basketball League of Canada game at Budweiser Gardens on Thursday. The Lightning improved their record to 11-0 by taking down the Moncton Miracles by a score of 131-110.

JOHN MATISZ/METRO

Short-staffed Knights aim for record win streak

Let it pour. And maybe a new OHL teddy-bear toss record?

JOHN MATISZ
john.matisz@metronews.ca

It was Knights forward Chris Tierney who first found the net during last year's teddy-bear toss night in London, releasing the onslaught of airborne plush toys.

A total of 9,851 furry animals — an Ontario Hockey League record — poured down from the bleachers after Tierney solved Guelph Storm goalie Garret Sparks midway through the opening frame of an eventual 3-1 victory for the London Knights.

"I remember coming off my backhand. I swept in, put it on net, and it squeaked in," the 18-year-old said, laughing. "Everyone thought Colin Martin scored it. He did a big celebration and then it got announced I scored."

Tierney, a native of Keswick, says he has trouble recalling goals in great detail, but the teddy-bear toss snipe stands out. And there's no doubt this year's goal-scorer will have the sequence etched in his memory, too, especially with a franchise record at stake.

Chris Tierney CONTRIBUTED

On Friday — the 2012-13 season's teddy-bear toss night — the Knights will be in search of their 19th straight victory. The club record for consecutive wins is 18, set by the 2004-05 squad and tied by the current team last Sunday.

This weekend, more than any other time in the month-and-a-half run, it could be argued the pre-game advantage belongs to London's three opponents. The Knights are without four of their top six rearguards, with a trio at world junior camps and Kevin Raine suspended.

To make matters worse, struggling forward Ryan Rupert could sit out to nurse a dislocated finger.

"I feel like the weekend, to be honest, is going to be real hard," forward-turned-defenceman Brett Welychka said. "We all know it. Everyone knows it's going to be tough."

This weekend

Friday

- Bud Gardens, 7:30 p.m.
- Vs. Owen Sound Attack
- Record: 22-7-1-2
- The hot hand: Daniel Catenacci (17 goals, 28 assists)

Saturday

- Sleeman Centre, 2 p.m.
- Vs.: Guelph Storm
- Record: 20-9-0-3
- The hot hand: Tanner Richard (3 goals, 36 assists)

Sunday

- Bud Gardens, 2 p.m.
- Vs. Kingston Frontenacs
- Record: 16-14-1-0
- The hot hand: Darcy Greenaway (18 goals, 13 assists)

The Owen Sound Attack, who are in town on Friday, are also short-handed. Their high-profile netminder, Jordan Binnington, is in Calgary vying for a spot on Team Canada's world junior team.

Food-drive donations low: Business Cares

A local food drive is making an urgent plea to Londoners less than two weeks before Christmas.

The Business Cares Food Drive says two weeks after its official launch, just 25 per cent of their overall goal has been collected.

According to the drive's website, so far just 27,220 pounds of food has been donated.

The annual campaign is in its 13th year and organizers had hoped to surpass last year's goal of 256,000 pounds of food.

There are at least 300 local businesses participating in the event and donations are also being accepted from the general public with everything that's collected going to the London Food Bank.

"We're just barely off the ground so we have a long way to go with the food and cheques," organizer Wayne Dunn said. "With seven days left in the campaign, (the current total) would indicate to me there's a lot more work to do."

Dunn says they'll begin pickups on Monday.

Drop-off locations

You can drop off donations at Aboutown Airbus Express (17 York St.) as well as at County Heritage (1275 Hubrey Rd., just south of the 401).

"We're really calling on Londoners to come out and help us in any way they can," Dunn says.

For more information, visit www.businesscares.ca.

AM980.CA

Sexual assault

Former CF medical technician charged

A former Canadian Forces medical technician faces eight counts of sexual assault and nine counts of breach of trust in connection to incidents in London and Thunder Bay. AM980.CA

Canada Cares challenge

Show caregivers love, win prizes

Canada Cares has launched a program to recognize caregivers across the country. Everyone who submits content on their website will be entered into a draw. METRO

Under the Volcano. Restaurant relocating from Richmond Row

The owners of a popular Richmond Row restaurant say a lack of free parking in the core is one of the reasons they're moving their business elsewhere.

Under the Volcano has been at the corner of Richmond and Picadilly for the past 10 years. As of March, however, the Mexican eatery will move to the former CityView Restaurant location at Wharncliffe and Riverside.

"I have a much better exposure over there, I have good drive-by view — a lot of people will see me — and, I have free parking!" said restaurant owner Dagmar Wendt.

Location, location, location

"Considering all the problems with being downtown, like having no free parking. That was basically it."

Dagmar Wendt, restaurant owner

Volcano's new location has been without a tenant for several months. Wendt said renovations will begin soon.

"I want to make it nice, and colourful." AM980.CA

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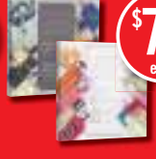

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Butcher's Choice

Burgers recalled over E. coli cases

Four cases of E. coli infection have prompted a recall of frozen hamburgers across the country.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Loblaw Companies Ltd. are warning the public to avoid certain Butcher's Choice Garlic Peppercorn Beef Burgers because of possible contamination.

The affected product is sold frozen in 1.13-kilogram packages with a best-before date of March 3.

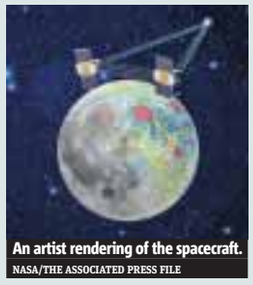
Public Health officials notified the CFIA on Dec. 5 that the E.coli cases could possibly be linked to a food source, which prompted the investigation into the meat. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Ebb and Flow

NASA spacecraft to crash into moon

Twin NASA spacecraft will crash into the lunar surface next week after a successful mission mapping the moon's gravity.

They're aiming for a mountain that's far away from the Apollo landing sites. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



An artist rendering of the spacecraft.
NASA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Oregon slayings

Mall shooter's act a shock to family

To police and witnesses, Jacob Tyler Roberts was a gunman on a mission, firing a semiautomatic rifle as he stalked through a U.S. mall, killing two people and seriously injuring another before killing himself. To shocked friends and family, he was just Jake, an easygoing 22-year-old who liked video games and talked about moving to Hawaii.

"Jake was never the violent type," Roberts' ex-girlfriend, Hannah Patricia Sansburn, told ABC News. "His main goal was to make you laugh, smile, make you feel comfortable. You can't reconcile the differences." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Alleged plot to kill Bieber foiled at Canadian border

Wrong turn. Police say alleged would-be assassins arrived at the border by mistake, were arrested, then betrayed

A plot to kill Justin Bieber, allegedly masterminded by a 45-year-old prisoner obsessed with the star, was derailed when the accused would-be assassins accidentally ended up at the Canadian border, according to court documents.

Dana Martin, serving two life sentences in a New Mexico prison for the killing of a 15-year-old girl, told police he had hatched the scheme after Bieber never returned his messages.

Police recounted in an affidavit that Martin, who has a tattoo of Bieber on his leg, told them the sleight was partly why he dreamt up the plot.

"In the end, what Mr. Martin stated he was seeking was a measure of notoriety," police wrote.

Bieber was not the only target in the alleged conspiracy — police say two men Martin hired were also told to kill Bieber's bodyguard and two people unconnected to the star.

Justin Bieber at Z100's Jingle Ball in New York last Friday.
EVAN AGOSTINI/INVISION/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The men Martin allegedly had carrying out his plot were to use pruning shears to cut off the testicles of the first two victims in Vermont, kill them, then travel to New York, kill the bodyguard and abduct and kill Bieber, Martin told police.

Martin said he drew Mark Staake, 41, into his plot when they met in prison this year with claims he had a lot of money, a hide-out and gang connections.

Staake brought his 23-year-old nephew, Tanner Ruane, into the scheme, Martin told investigators.

Staake was released on probation at the end of October. The murder was to take place in New York at the end of November, according to the affidavit, when Bieber was there for a concert.

The team arrived in Vermont on Nov. 19 but realized on the highway they were headed to the Canadian border, according to the affidavit. They missed the last exit before the border and turned around to join the cars entering the Highgate Springs, Vt., point of entry, police said.

The U.S. border agent found Staake had an outstanding probation violation warrant and he was arrested.

Martin and Ruane spoke on the phone later that day, and when Ruane told Martin that Staake had been arrested, Martin called off the plot. In the phone call, recorded by authorities, Ruane expressed disappointment at the decision, saying they had found one of the victims' homes.

Martin told his story to police the next morning and Ruane was arrested with a pair of pruning shears and information on the locations of the first two intended victims, police wrote. New York State Police said Thursday that a "hand-written drawing of a depiction of Justin Bieber" was also found in the vehicle.

Staake and Ruane were arrested on charges of two counts each of conspiracy to commit murder and two counts each of conspiracy to commit aggravated battery. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Dana Martin LEON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mark Staake VERMONT STATE POLICE/ THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tanner Ruane NEW YORK STATE POLICE/ THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Russia concedes Syrian regime may fall

Syria's most powerful ally and protector, Russia, began positioning itself Thursday for the fall of President Bashar Assad, saying for the first time that rebels might overthrow him and preparing to evacuate thousands of Russian citizens from the country.

The head of NATO echoed the Russian assessment, saying the Syrian government is near collapse following a nearly two-year conflict that has killed more than 40,000 people and threatened to ignite the Middle East. Assad appears to be running out of options, with insurgents at the gates of the capital and the country fracturing under the weight of a devastating civil war.

"An opposition victory can't be excluded, unfortunately, but it's necessary to look at the facts: There is a trend for the government to progressively lose control over an increasing part of the territory," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov, Moscow's Middle East envoy, said during hearings at a Kremlin advisory body.

Still, Bogdanov gave no immediate signal that Russia would change its pro-Syria stance at the UN Security Council, where Moscow has shielded Damascus from world sanctions.

Syrian boys attend class in a city under Free Syrian Army control.
MANU BRABO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The U.S. commended Russia "for finally waking up to the reality and acknowledging that the regime's days are numbered," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said.

"We call on Russia to work with us ... work with the various stakeholders in Syria to start moving towards a transitional structure and we would like to have their help in doing that," she added.

Russia's acknowledgment that Assad could lose is an embarrassing blow to the regime, which describes the rebels as terrorists sent from abroad with no popular support.

But the rebels have made significant gains in recent weeks, seizing large swaths of territory in the north and expanding their control on the outskirts of the capital, pushing the fight closer to Assad's seat of power.

On Wednesday, the U.S., Europe and their allies recognized the newly reorganized opposition leadership, giving it a stamp of credibility even though it remains to be seen if the new bloc holds much sway with the fighters on the ground.

In the last four decades, Russia has sold Syria billions of dollars' worth of weapons. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Royal hoax. Details emerge on nurse's apparent suicide

A nurse was found hanging in her room three days after she had been duped by a hoax call from Australian DJs about the pregnant Duchess of Cambridge, a U.K. inquest was told Thursday. The case is being treated as an apparent suicide.

Coroner's officer Lynda Martindill said nurse Jacintha Saldanha was discovered hanging by a scarf from a wardrobe in her nurses' quarters Friday by a colleague and a member of security staff at London's King Edward VII Hospital.

Martindill said an attempt to revive Saldanha failed.

Police detective chief inspector James Harman said Saldanha, 46, also had injuries to her wrists.

He told the inquest at Westminster Coroner's Court that two notes were found at the scene and another was found among Saldanha's belongings. He said there were no suspicious circumstances, meaning nobody else was involved in Saldanha's death.

Harman said police were examining the notes, interviewing the nurse's friends, family and colleagues and looking at emails and phone calls to establish what led to her death.

He also said detectives would be contacting police in the Australian state of New South Wales to collect "relevant evidence."

Saldanha answered the phone last week when two Australian disc jockeys called seeking information about the former Kate Middleton, who was being treated for severe morning sickness. The DJs impersonated Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Charles, and Saldanha was tricked into transferring the call to another nurse, who revealed private details about the duchess' condition.

Saldanha, who was born in India, lived in Bristol in southwestern England with her husband and two teenage children. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Google hides porn under cyber mattress

Filtering furor. Change to SafeSearch settings means fewer saucy pics turn up in results

In a move that polarized online opinion, Google introduced a new algorithm Thursday that will produce fewer pornographic images on its image search.

The change took effect in the U.S. only, and hasn't yet been implemented in Canada.

Twitter was abuzz with the change, which seems to affect the U.K., U.S. and Canada, but not some European countries like Germany.

"Is Google Censuring Porn on Image Search, or Is Search Broken?" tweeted @Philbo as news of the new filter broke Thursday morning.

Most of the early tweets expressed dismay in what was perceived to be increased censorship.

"Don't be evil, Google? Then why does your new Google Images algorithm make it harder to find porn?," tweeted @omar_aok.

But some users saw an upside: "Good news for schools: Google image search gets safer," wrote @jeremypearson.

The new search results come after Google recently changed its SafeSearch settings. Instead of having three SafeSearch options (off, moderate and on), users now only have the option of turning an explicit results filter on or off.

In a statement emailed to Torstar News Service, Google explained that the adult content isn't being censored, just that a user will have to search for it specifically.

"We use algorithms to select the most relevant results for a given query. If you're looking for adult content, you can find it without having to change the default setting — you just may need to be more explicit in your query if your search terms are potentially ambiguous," the statement read.

"No filter is 100 per cent accurate, but SafeSearch should help you avoid most of this type of material," writes Google on its help site.

Twitter user @_WillieClark solemnly declared Thursday "The day the porn died."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Market Minute

DOLLAR 101.54¢ (-0.01¢)

TSX 12,289.17 (-63.92)

OIL $85.89 US (-88¢)

GOLD $1,696.80 US (-$21.10)

Natural gas: $3.35 (-4¢)
Dow Jones: 13,170.72 (-74.73)

Can you give us examples?

"If you're looking for adult content, you can find it without having to change the default setting — you just may need to be more explicit in your query..."

Google statement

Take that, Apple — Google Maps makes a return

The new Google Maps application is shown in New York on Thursday. The world's most popular online mapping system has returned with the release of the Google Maps iPhone app. The release comes nearly three months after Apple Inc. replaced Google Maps — which was the iPhone's built-in navigation system — with its own map software. But Apple's maps proved to be far inferior, and the product's shoddiness prompted Apple CEO Tim Cook to issue a rare public apology. A Google Maps iPad app is in the works, but for now, iPad owners can use the maps in iPhone mode. That won't be the best experience, but still may be better than Apple's maps on the iPad. KARLY DOMB SADOF/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ottawa

Supreme Court sides with cable, satellite firms on fee system

The CRTC does not have power to make cable providers pay broadcasters for carrying their TV signals, says a decision handed down Thursday by the Supreme Court of Canada that one analyst said should be a win for consumers.

While the decision was hailed by one major cable company as a step forward for customers, broadcasters said the very survival of local TV is at stake.

The Supreme Court ruled in a 5-4 decision that setting up such a system is not within the scope of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission.

Telecom analyst Troy Crandall said it's the status quo for consumers, who won't have to bear any costs of a fee-for-carriage system. "It looks like a win for consumers right now because it's not going to have an immediate impact," said Crandall of MacDougall, MacDougall & MacTier in Montreal. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Statistics Canada

New house prices up 0.2% in October

Statistics Canada says its price index for new housing rose 0.2 per cent in October. The combined metropolitan region of Toronto and Oshawa, as well as the Montreal region, were the top contributors to the increase.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

SANTA IN THE CITY
Santa Claus is coming to Centre Court!
Join Citi Plaza for the FREE Storytime with Santa followed by the FREE screening of the movie at Rainbow Cinemas.
Story begins at 9:30 a.m.
–
Movie begins at 10:30 a.m.
Saturday, Dec. 15 - All I Want for Christmas
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Cyberstalking. U.S. law would crack down on apps that track cellphone users

For about $50, a jealous wife or husband can download cellphone software that can track the whereabouts of a spouse better than any private detective. But in the United States, it soon might be illegal.

The Senate Judiciary Committee was expected on Thursday to approve a law closing a legal loophole that allows so-called cyberstalking apps to operate secretly on a cellphone and transmit the user's location without a person's knowledge.

Telephone companies are barred from disclosing to businesses the locations of people when they make a traditional phone call. But there's no such prohibition on the Internet, and the ambiguity has created a niche for companies such as Retina Software, which makes ePhoneTracker and describes it as "stealth phone spy software."

Retina Software says the program is for the lawful monitoring of a cellphone that the purchaser of the software owns and has a right to monitor. But supporters of the bill say there is no way to ensure the rules are followed.

Victim's advocacy groups say the bill will help to curb stalking and domestic violence.

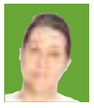
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

People will stalk

"Suspect your spouse is cheating? Don't break the bank by hiring a private investigator."

Slogan on Retina Software's website

MONKEY SEE, GOOSE BUMP, BEAR NO CAN DO



THE LIST
Mike Benhaim
metronews.ca

1 **Pimpin' primate:** The week's top story involves a stylishly-dressed monkey wandering cluelessly around a store, and eventually taken to live with a baboon. Wasn't that the premise for Jersey Shore?

2 **Call Me Maybe:** The "Robocall" challenge went before Federal Court this week. Voters questioned the integrity of the election process, and political scientist Peter Russel said, "Canadian citizens don't want to be lied to in robocalls." He's right. Canadians are accustomed to politicians who lie to us in person, dammit!

3 **Diminishing returns:** Imagine waiting hours at a restaurant for a steak, and then being given two of them minutes before they close. You now have to consume massive quantities in a hurry, and while the first two bites are satisfying, the whole thing just ends up making you sick. Welcome to your condensed NHL season.

4 **Good for the goose:** The Canadian dollar rose slightly this week while American currency weakened when it was announced that the U.S. Federal Reserve would be printing additional money to buy up more bonds. I had a friend who used to do that but I haven't seen him in years.

5 **Single mother:** An 11-year-old female polar bear at the Toronto Zoo, who last year rejected three of her own cubs, gave birth to three more on Dec. 6. One died shortly after birth, and the others died on Sunday. The zoo is unclear about how these last two died, and they are investigating. Now, I'm no social worker, but maybe she's just not ready for motherhood?

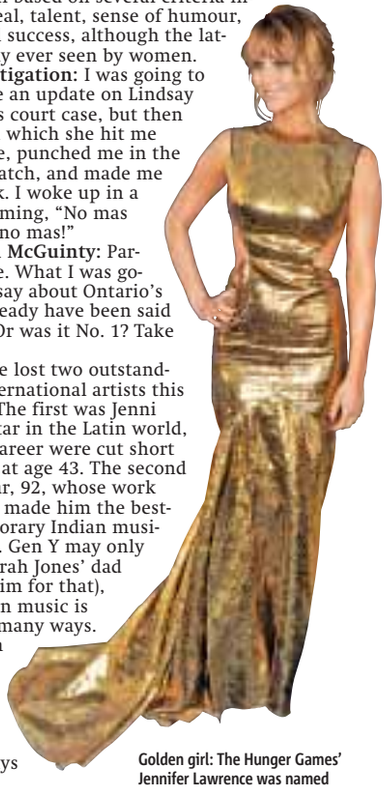
6 **Ask Men?:** Jennifer Lawrence, the 22-year-old star of The Hunger Games, has been named the "most desirable woman" of the year in an annual AskMen.com poll based on several criteria including sex appeal, talent, sense of humour, and professional success, although the latter three are only ever seen by women.

7 **Li-Lo litigation:** I was going to provide an update on Lindsay Lohan's court case, but then I had a dream in which she hit me with her Porsche, punched me in the face, stole my watch, and made me watch Liz & Dick. I woke up in a cold sweat screaming, "No mas Lindsay, please, no mas!"

8 **Dalton McGuinty:** Pardon me. What I was going to say about Ontario's premier may already have been said in No. 2 above. Or was it No. 1? Take your pick.

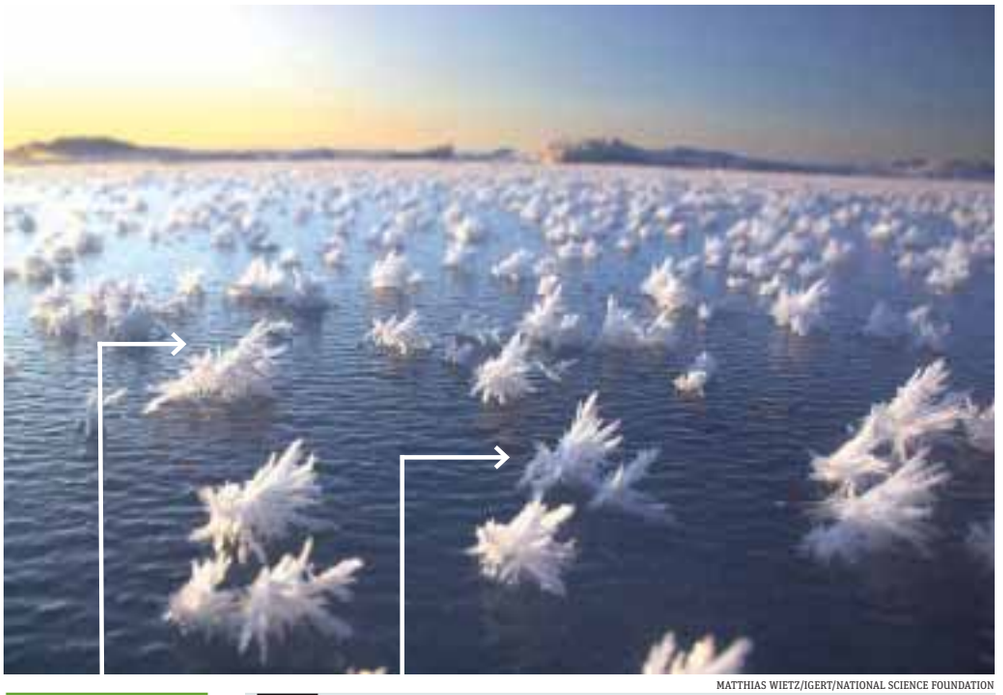
9 **RIP:** We lost two outstanding international artists this week. The first was Jenni Rivera, a huge star in the Latin world, whose life and career were cut short in a plane crash at age 43. The second was Ravi Shankar, 92, whose work with the Beatles made him the best-known contemporary Indian musician of our time. Gen Y may only know him as Norah Jones' dad (and we thank him for that), but his impact on music is unparalleled in many ways. Thankfully, both of these artists left their music for us to cherish. Rock & Roll heaven awaits.

Happy Holidays to all.



Golden girl: The Hunger Games' Jennifer Lawrence was named AskMen.com's 'most desirable woman' of the year. GETTY IMAGES FILE

Blooming cold in the Arctic



MATTHIAS WIETZ/IGERT/NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

In the garden of freezin'

Chilly air creates a sea of flowers at the North Pole

Some (flowers) like it hot, but others like these in the North Pole prefer it very cold. Frost flowers, a natural phenomenon where frost grows amid an extremely cold atmosphere on top of warmer water, form unusual floral structures that host microorganisms. Oceanographer Jeff Bowman spoke to Metro about his research. MWN

Q&A

Like frost, but in 3-D

How are these frost flowers formed?
They grow on new ice with open cracks. The extremely cold air (below -8 C) becomes saturated and frost starts to form on the ice's imperfections. Then feathery structures begin to grow out of the cracks, and incorporate marine salt and microorganisms like algae. They are no different to frost formations, but only in 3-D.

What is the significance of these ethereal structures?

Jeff Bowman at work in the Arctic Ocean. MATTHIAS WIETZ/IGERT/NSF

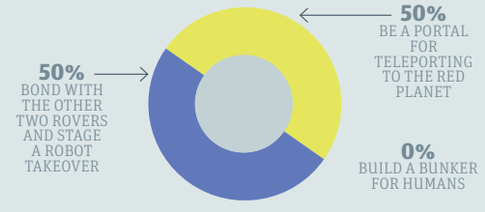
Chemical reactions in the flowers produce compounds that help form clouds. This low cloud cover can alter the local climate — by reflecting sunlight back into space — and thus make the region colder. In addition, frost flowers can potentially release aerosols, which can lead to ozone depletion. But so far this is nothing more than speculation.

What was your first reaction when you saw these?
They are stunning and so ubiquitous, you can see them for kilometres. They form very abruptly, within only a few hours. I recall one expedition to the North Pole: when the fog cleared the entire icescape was covered as far as the eye could see by these bizarre yet beautiful shapes.

Metropolitan Panel

Register at metropolitanpanel.ca and take the quick poll

NASA is planning to send another rover to Mars. What should be its mission?


50%
BE A PORTAL FOR TELEPORTING TO THE RED PLANET
50%
BOND WITH THE OTHER TWO ROVERS AND STAGE A ROBOT TAKEOVER
0%
BUILD A BUNKER FOR HUMANS

Twitter

@nkotbsbgrl78: This is getting creepy; I've seen my cat staring off @ the wall or ceiling intently several times & when I look nothing is there.

@abbey_lawrence: I hate how guarded I am now when it comes to being with someone. I've just been disappointed too many times...

@cstudies: Keep green in mind this Holiday Season, give #sustainable gifts #westernu

@YOUYAC: Where's the best place to get 100 durable reusable grocery bags that we can use to hand out Food Bank items for the Holidays? #ldnont Help!

@AB_Gonzales: I still love you, @ClubWeldon, but Downtown London is my new study spot... #LdnOnt

metro

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The Hobbit is a coming-of-age story for Bilbo Baggins. HANDOUT

Reel Guys

RICHARD CROUSE AND MARK BRESLIN

High-def hobbits?

Too much tech. The tale of the beginning of Lord of the Rings is overshadowed by 48 frames per second

Richard: Ned, as much as the story and performances, people will be talking about the presentation of the movie. Shot and projected at 48 frames a second — twice the industry standard — the picture is so vivid, so pristine, it doesn't really look like a movie. Combine that with the 3D and it's like watching mega high-definition. Every goblin wart and troll blemish is distinct enough to give dermatologists everywhere nightmares. What did you think of the mega-super-hi-definition look?

Ned: I have to say, the 48 frames per second was a problem for me. It often looked somewhere between a super-high definition 1980s BBC miniseries and a video game, and it just felt utterly un-cinematic. Saying that it doesn't really look like a movie hits the nail on the head. Christopher Nolan has harped on in the past about film having a "warmth" that video can't replicate, and I think I see what he means here. But the biggest crime, I think, is that the sweeping shots of the New Zealand landscape looked fake.

RC: Perhaps it's like the difference between vinyl or CD. I prefer the warm sound of old-school vinyl to the hard digital preproduction of CD. The pops and skips are part of the experience, just as film blur and grain are a part of watching 35 mm projected on the big screen. Having said that, Gollum is awesome at 48 frames a second. The extended scene (for the record, most of the scenes in the film could be called extended), in which Bilbo and Gollum meet and trade riddles is one of the highlights of the film thanks to Serkis' astounding motion capture performance.

NE: That scene is the true highlight of the film, and it coincidentally is where Martin Freeman, as the younger Bilbo, really shines as well. But even with this standout, Peter Jackson and company manage to spoil it (for me at least) by overdoing Gollum's last line to beat the viewer over the head with another reminder that all this leads to the Lord of the Rings. It's a bad habit running through the film that grows tedious. Elijah Wood's cameo is particularly clumsy in this regard, with him basically describing what he's going to do in his first scene in Fellowship of the Ring and then running off to do it.

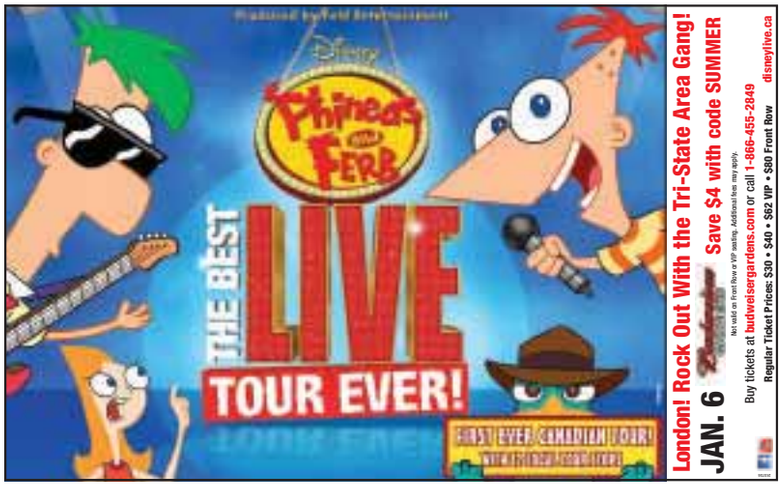
RC: It may be clumsy, but I think fans of the series will revel at the chance of revisiting the characters!

NE: Well, they'll have plenty of chances. If you like this one, the good news is it's just the first of three movies.

Synopsis

The prequel to the immensely popular Lord of the Rings films is a coming-of-age story for Bilbo Baggins (Martin Freeman), a stay-at-home hobbit from Bag End, in Hobbiton in the Shire. He's content with his quiet life until Gandalf (Ian McKellen), a wizard, recruits him to help a group of 13 dwarves in their quest to reclaim their former home, the Lonely Mountain, and its treasure from the dragon Smaug.

- Richard: ●●●○○
- Ned: ●●●○○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Barbra Streisand lets Metro in on a few little secrets about her career

The Guilt Trip. Multi-talented entertainer dishes about the film industry, Seth Rogen and getting scripts

NED EHRBAR
Metro World News in Hollywood

Barbra Streisand says she wasn't able to find out any dirt about Seth Rogen before they started working together. HANDOUT

Barbra Streisand is many things — an acclaimed actress, singer, director and writer, political activist and philanthropist — but most of all she's a woman not afraid to speak her mind. So what wisdom did Streisand have to impart while promoting the Guilt Trip, her first starring role in a movie since the Mirror Has Two Faces in 1996?

The secret to her success is staying home
"I don't make that many movies and I don't make that many appearances," she says. "That's it. Less is more. And maybe that keeps a little mystery or something. I like to stay home a lot."

She doesn't like where the film industry has been going
"It's not the same as when I last made a film. They're not interested in love stories or any movie that's over $15 million. But it could be $100 million, that's OK. Two hundred million is OK to lose," she says with a laugh. "But movies that I'm used to making or liking, that draw me, they're movies that cost $18 million, $20 million, and they're not interested in those movies. It's a different time. I don't like it as much."

She doesn't actually get sent that many scripts to consider
"I don't. You see, everybody gets like that. 'She must get so many scripts, why would I send it to her? She'll never get a chance to read it,'" Streisand laments. "Meanwhile I'll go, 'Where are the scripts?'"

Getting her to do The Guilt Trip required an actual guilt trip from director Anne Fletcher
"I remember … I said to Anne, 'Would you make the movie without me?' And she said no," Streisand recalls. "I felt bad, guilty. I said, 'Oh no, she's not going to have this job.'"

While co-star Seth Rogen asked around about what working with Streisand would be like, she wasn't able to do any similar research.
"Seth, it turns out, sussed me out," she says. "He called people from the Focker movies. I didn't know who to call. I don't know any of those people from his movies, so what was I going to do?"she adds.

What's next in the Broadway to big screen adaptations?

Speculation. Filmmakers take note — there's plenty of material to be found on the stage. Here are some musicals we'd like to see hit the multiplex

STEVE GOW
scene@metronews.ca

There are tentative plans for a film version of The Book of Mormon. HANDOUT

With Les Misérables hitting theatres Christmas Day, it'll mark just the latest Broadway hit to be brought to the big-screen. While fans must wait a little longer before checking out the adaptation, we wanted to examine other Broadway classics that have yet to be converted into cinematic gold.

The Book of Mormon
Conceived by funnymen Trey Parker and Matt Stone, The Book of Mormon isn't just the 2011 Tony Award champion; it's an unlikely hit musical about missionaries in war-torn Uganda that mixes satire and song the way only the creators of TV's South Park can do.

Status: Although the comic duo announced eventual plans for a film version, Parker admitted they're in no rush, telling Movieline, "We'd have to really rethink it."

Avenue Q
Debuting from an experimental play in 2003, this Sesame-Street-for-adults show featuring politically-incorrect (and sometimes nude!) puppets struggling in Manhattan could amp it up even more for the big screen.

Status: There have been rumours but no serious plans are in the works for a big-screen version. May I suggest someone call Jason Segel?

Jersey Boys
This musical biography may have debuted in San Diego but the story of 1960s singing group the Four Seasons has become one of Broadway's biggest box-office draws.

Status: Floating around Hollywood for years, Jersey Boys was to begin production in January (with Iron Man's Jon Favreau directing) until Warner Brothers' recently yanked the project. And so we wait.

Wicked
One of Broadway's longest running shows, Wicked visits the story of the Wizard of Oz from the witches' point of view. Having repeatedly broken box-office records since its 2003 debut, Tinseltown has taken notice.

Status: Under the direction of Oscar-nominated filmmaker Stephen Daldry (Billy Elliot), Wicked is likely to be the next movie musical — with a tentative release date set for 2014.

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London

Hyland Cinema
240 Wharncliffe Road South, 519-913-0313

Anna Karenina (14A) Fri 2:35-9 Sat 1-6:50 Sun 12:30-7 Mon-Tue 2:35-6:45 Wed 1-9:30 Thu 2:10-6:45
Argo (14A) Fri 5 Sat 9:15 Sun 9:25 Mon-Tue 9:10 Wed 5 Thu 4:35
Chasing Ice (PG) Fri 1 Sat 5 Sun 5:25 Mon 1 Tue 5 Thu 12:30
Ping Pong (STC) Fri 7:20 Sat 3:25 Mon 5 Tue 1 Wed 3:25 Thu 9:10
White Christmas (PG) Sun 3 Wed 7:10

Rainbow Cinemas London
355 Wellington St., 519-434-3073

All I Want for Christmas (STC) Sat 10:30
The Guilt Trip (PG) Wed-Thu 12:50-3:10-6:50-9:10
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (PG) Fri-Tue 12:50-3:15-4:15-7:30-9:15 Wed 12:50-3:15-4:15-9:15 Thu 12:50-3:15-4:15-7:30-9:15
Life of Pi (PG) Fri-Thu 1:05-3:40-7:10-9:50
Lincoln (PG) Fri-Thu 12:45-3:45-6:50-9:45
Playing for Keeps (PG) Fri-Tue 12:50-3:10-6:50-9:10
Rise of the Guardians (G) Fri-Thu 1:15-3:35-7:15-9:25
Skyfall (PG) Fri-Sun 12:55-3:55-6:55-9:45 Mon 12:55-3:55-9:45 Tue-Thu 12:55-3:55-6:55-9:45

Western Film Room 340, UCC Building,

No Films Showing Today (STC) Fri-Thu

Wellington 8 Cinemas
983 Wellington Rd. S, 519-685-2529

The Guilt Trip (PG) No Passes Wed-Thu 5-7:50
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (PG) No Passes Fri 8 No Passes Sat-Sun 12-4-8 No Passes Mon-Thu 4-8
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey 3D (PG) No Passes Fri 8:30 No Passes Sat-Sun 12:30-4:30-8:30 No Passes Mon-Thu 4:30-8:30
Killing Them Softly (18A) Fri 6:30-9:10 Sat-Sun 12:50-3:30-6:30-9:10 Mon-Tue 5-7:50
Life of Pi (PG) Sat-Sun 12:40
Life of Pi 3D (PG) Fri 6:50-9:40 Sat-Sun 3:40-6:50-9:40 Mon-Thu 4:45-7:40
Monsters, Inc. 3D (G) No Passes Wed-Thu 4:40-7:20
Playing for Keeps (PG) Fri 7:10-9:45 Sat-Sun 1:20-4:10-7:10-9:45 Mon-Thu 4:20-8:10
Rise of the Guardians (G) Sat-Sun 1:10 Wed-Thu 4:50-7:10
Rise of the Guardians 3D (G) Fri 7-9:20 Sat-Sun 3:45-7-9:20 Mon-Tue 4:50-7:10
Skyfall (PG) Fri 6:40-9:50 Sat-Sun 12:10-3:20-6:40-9:50 Mon-Thu 4:10-7:30
The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 2 (PG) Fri 6:45-9:30 Sat-Sun 1-3:50-6:45-9:30 Mon-Tue 4:40-7:20

Cineplex Odeon Westmount & VIP Cinemas
755 Wonderland Road South, 519-474-2796

The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (PG) No Passes Fri 2:30-6:15-10 No Passes Sat 12-2:30-6:15-10 No Passes Sun 2:30-6:15-10 No Passes Mon 5:45-9:30 No Passes Tue 2:15-6-9:45 No Passes Wed-Thu 5:45-9:30
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey 3D (PG) No Passes Fri-Sun 3-6:45-10:30 No Passes Mon 6:30-10:10 No Passes Tue 2:45-6:30-10:10 No Passes Wed-Thu 6:30-10:10 No Passes Fri 3:15-5:30-7-9:15-10:45 No Passes Sat-Sun 11:40-1:45-3:15-5:30-7-9:15-10:45 No Passes Mon 6:15-6:45-9:55-10:25 No Passes Tue 3-5:30-6:45-9:15-10:25 No Passes Wed-Thu 6:15-6:45-9:55-10:25 No Passes Sun 12
Life of Pi 3D (PG) Fri 4-7:10-10:10 Sat 1-4-7:10-10:10 Sun 12-4-7:10-10:10 Mon 7-9:55 Tue 4-7:10-10:10 Wed-Thu 7-9:55
The Metropolitan Opera: Aida Live (STC) Sat 12:55 Sat 12:55
Playing for Keeps (PG) Fri 2:30-5:05-7:40-10:25 Sat 1:40-7:50-10:35 Sun 11:50-2:25-5:05-7:40-10:25 Mon 7:15-9:50 Tue 2:30-5:05-7:40-10:25 Wed-Thu 7:15-9:50
Rise of the Guardians (G) Sat-Sun 11:45
Rise of the Guardians 3D (G) Fri 2:25-4:50-7:30-10:05 Sat-Sun 2:15-4:50-7:30-10:05 Mon 6:40-9:15 Tue 2:20-4:50-7:30-10:05 Wed-Thu 6:40-9:15
Silver Linings Playbook (14A) Fri-Sat 4:20-7:20-10:20 Sun 1:20-4:20-7:20-10:20 Mon 7:05-10:05 Tue 4:20-7:20-10:20 Wed-Thu 7:05-10:05
Skyfall (PG) Fri 3:40-7-10:15 Sat 11:50-3:40-7-10:15 Sun 12:15-3:40-7-10:15 Mon 6:50-10 Tue 3:40-7-10:15 Wed-Thu 6:50-10 Fri 3:30-6:30-9:40 Sat 6:30-9:40 Sun 12:20-3:30-6:30-9:40 Mon 5:45-9 Tue 3:15-6:15-9:45 Wed-Thu 5:45-9
The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 2 (PG) Fri 2:25-5-7:50-10:35 Sat 11:50-2:25-5:05-7:40-10:25 Sun 11:55-2:30-5:15-8-10:45 Mon 7:10-10 Tue 2:25-5-7:50-10:35 Wed-Thu 7:10-10

SilverCity London
1680 Richmond St, 519-673-4125

Batman Returns (STC) Mon 7:30
The Guilt Trip (PG) No Passes Wed-Thu 1:40-4:25-7:20-10:15
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (PG) No Passes Fri-Sat 12-2-3:45-5:50-7:30-9:30-11:15 No Passes Sun 12-2-3:45-5:50-7:30-9:30 No Passes Mon-Tue 1:30-2:30-5:15-6:15-9-10 No Passes Wed 1:25-2:30-5:15-6:15-9-10 No Passes Thu 1:30-2:30-5:15-6:15-9-10
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey — An IMAX 3D Experience (PG) No Passes Fri 11:45-3:20-7-10:40 No Passes Sat 1:45-11:45-3:20-7-10:40 No Passes Sun 11:45-3:20-7-10:40 No Passes Mon-Thu 12:40-4:20-8
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey 3D (PG) No Passes Fri 2:45-6:30-10:15 No Passes Sat 11-2:45-6:30-10:15 No Passes Sun 2:45-6:30-10:15 No Passes Mon-Thu 3-6:45-10:25
Jingle All the Way (STC) Sat 11
Killing Them Softly (18A) Fri 12:45-3:15-5:45-8:15-10:45 Sat 3:15-5:45-8:15-10:45 Sun 12:15-2:40-5-10:45 Mon 12:45-3:05-5:35-7:55-10:10 Tue 12:45-3:05-5:35-7:55-10:35
Life of Pi 3D (PG) Fri-Sun 1:30-4:30-7:35-10:35 Mon-Thu 1-4-6:55-9:55
Lincoln (PG) Fri 12:30-3:50-7:10-10:30 Sat 1-4:15-7:25-10:55 Sun 12:30-3:50-7:10-10:30 Mon 12:50-4:05-7:15-10:30 Tue 12:50-4:05-7:15-10:40 Wed-Thu 12:50-4:05-7:15-10:30
The Metropolitan Opera: Aida Live (STC) Sat 12:55
Monsters, Inc. 3D (G) Wed-Thu 1:10-3:55-7-9:50
National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation (STC) Thu 7:30
Playing for Keeps (PG) Fri 12:05-2:40-5:15-7:45-10:20 Sat 12:40-7:45-10:20 Sun 12:05-2:40-5:15-7:45-10:20 Mon 1:50-4:15-10:20 Tue 1:50-4:15-7:10-10:30 Wed 1:50-4:15-7:10-10:20 Thu 1:50-4:15-10:20
Rise of the Guardians (G) Fri-Sun 12:10 Mon-Thu 1:05
Rise of the Guardians 3D (G) Fri-Sun 2:30-5:10-7:50-10:10 Mon-Thu 3:15-5:25-7:50-10:05
Skyfall (PG) Fri-Sat 12:50-4:10-7:40-11 Sun 12:25-3:40-7:15-10:25 Mon 12:40-3:50-7:05-10:30 Tue 12:40-3:50-7:05-10:45 Wed-Thu 12:40-3:50-7:05-10:30
The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 2 (PG) Fri-Sat 11:50-2:20-5:05-8-10:50 Sun 11:50-2:20-5:05-8-10:30 Mon 2:20-4:55-7:25-10:15 Tue-Thu 2:20-4:55-7:25-10:10
Wreck-It Ralph (PG) Fri 12:20 Sat 11:30-12:20 Sun 12:20 Mon-Tue 12:55
Wreck-It Ralph 3D (PG) Fri-Sat 2:55-5:30-7:55-10:25 Sun 2:55-5:30-7:55 Mon-Tue 3:10-5:30-7:45-10:15
WWE TLC: Tables, Ladders and Chairs (STC) Sun 8

Playing For Keeps HANDOUT

The Hollywood Foreign Press shows its love for Lincoln

Golden Globe noms. Spielberg flick grabs seven nods, while in TV, Homeland and Downton Abbey come out as favourites

NED EHRBAR
Metro World News in Hollywood

Steven Spielberg's Lincoln leads this year's Golden Globe Awards nominations, placing in seven categories including best drama, with nods for Spielberg and screenwriter Tony Kushner as well as actors Daniel Day-Lewis, Tommy Lee Jones and Sally Field, and composer John Williams.

Other favourites for the Hollywood Foreign Press include Ben Affleck's Argo, Kathryn Bigelow's Zero Dark Thirty and Quentin Tarantino's Django Unchained, all of which received best drama and best director nods, as well as other nominations.

On the television side, new series Nashville, Smash and the Newsroom earned accolades, while longtime awards favourite Mad Men failed to make the best television drama list for the first time.

Critical favourites Homeland and Downton Abbey earned four and three nominations each, respectively, and are expected to be favourites when the awards are handed out.

Biggest surprises

The Hollywood Foreign Press clearly has a thing for Nicole Kidman, nominating the actress in both film and TV categories. Her nod for Lee Daniels' The Paperboy may be the most controversial this year, as the film was widely panned coming out of the Cannes Film Festival.

Also a surprise? Multiple nominations for Salmon Fishing in the Yemen, an early 2012 film with little to no awards campaign. Stars Ewan McGregor and Emily Blunt earned acting nods while the film made the best musical or comedy list.

Biggest snubs

While Tom Hooper's presumed awards season juggernaut Les Miserables earned nods for best musical or comedy, plus best actor Hugh Jackman and supporting actress Anne Hathaway, Hooper himself didn't make the best director list. And despite turning in great performances in multiple films, Matthew McConaughey came up empty handed at the HFPA. Other notable snubs include Robert DeNiro for Silver Linings Playbook — though best supporting actor is the tightest race this year — and indie darling Beasts of the Southern Wild, which didn't receive a single nomination.

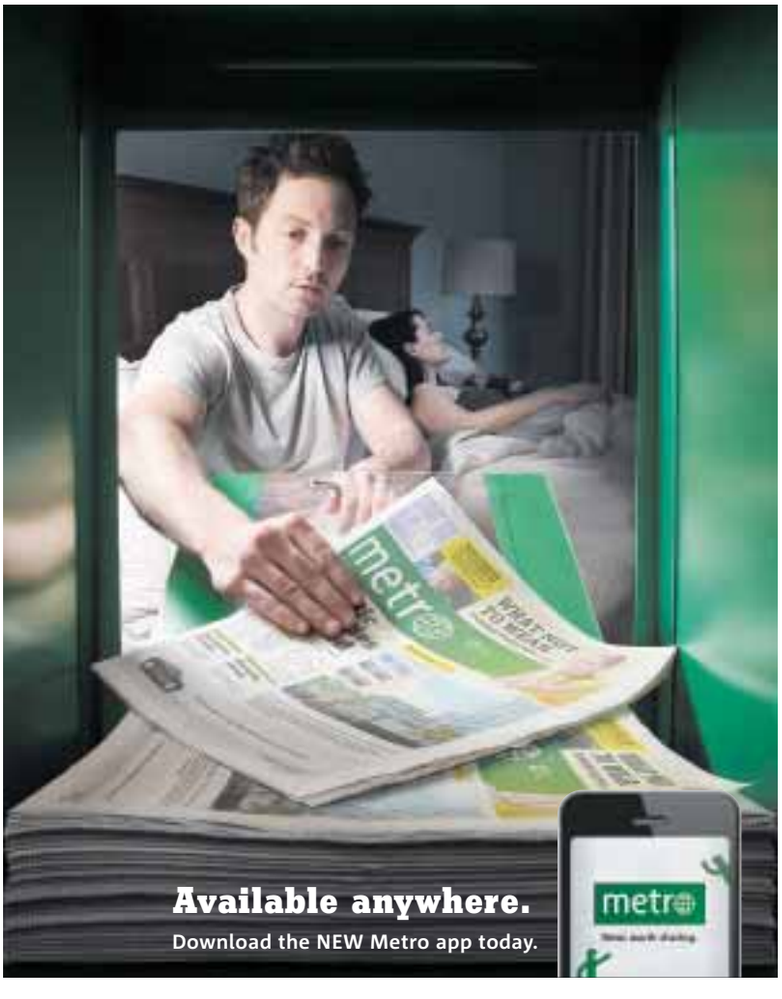
The 70th annual Golden Globe Awards will be handed out live January 13, hosted by Tina Fey and Amy Poehler, who are nominated against each other in the best actress in a television comedy category.

Bradley Cooper received a best actor nomination in a musical or comedy for his role in Silver Linings Playbook. HANDOUT

Some of the nominations

- **Best motion picture — drama.** Argo, Django Unchained, Life of Pi, Lincoln, Zero Dark Thirty
- **Best motion picture — musical or comedy.** Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, Les Miserables, Moonrise Kingdom, Salmon Fishing in the Yemen, Silver Linings Playbook
- **Best director.** Ben Affleck, Argo; Kathryn Bigelow, Zero Dark Thirty; Ang Lee, Life of Pi; Steven Spielberg, Lincoln; Quentin Tarantino, Django Unchained
- **Best actor, motion picture drama.** Daniel Day-Lewis, Lincoln; Richard Gere, Arbitrage; John Hawkes, The Sessions; Joaquin Phoenix, The Master; Denzel Washington, Flight
- **Best actress, motion picture drama.** Marion Cotillard, Rust and Bone; Jessica Chastain, Zero Dark Thirty; Helen Mirren, Hitchcock; Naomi Watts, The Impossible; Rachel Weisz, The Deep Blue Sea
- **Best actor, motion picture musical or comedy.** Jack Black, Bernie; Bradley Cooper, Silver Linings Playbook; Hugh Jackman, Les Miserables; Ewan McGregor, Salmon Fishing in the Yemen; Bill Murray, High Park on Hudson
- **Best actress, motion picture musical or comedy.** Emily Blunt, Salmon Fishing in the Yemen, Judi Dench, Best Exotic Marigold Hotel; Jennifer Lawrence, Silver Linings Playbook; Maggie Smith, Best Exotic Marigold Hotel; Meryl Streep, Hope Springs
- **Best drama series.** Breaking Bad, Boardwalk Empire, Downton Abbey, Homeland, The Newsroom
- **Best comedy series.** The Big Bang Theory, Episodes, Girls, Modern Family, Smash
- **Best actor in a television drama series.** Steve Buscemi, Boardwalk Empire; Bryan Cranston, Breaking Bad; Jeff Daniels, The Newsroom; Jon Hamm, Mad Men; Damian Lewis, Homeland

Quentin Tarantino's Django Unchained grabbed a number of nominations. HANDOUT



TV picks

All the Christmas specials you can handle: This week's TV picks

Back-to-back holiday specials Friday on Global start with Hoops & Yoyo Ruin Christmas. On Christmas Eve, Hoops, Yoyo and their friend, Piddles, disrupt the time-space continuum after sneaking into Santa's sleigh. Then, The Elf on the Shelf: An Elf's Story centres on an elf named Chippey who tries to help a young boy who is struggling to believe in the magic of Christmas. **(Global)**

Christmas movie classics abound on the dial Friday, with the Bing Crosby-Danny Kaye musical White Christmas sure to put you in a festive mood over on AMC. The 1954 feel-good romp is chock full of everything magical about the season: a winter wonderland, infectious tunes and a bit of romance. Over on CBC, there's Miracle on 34th Street for anyone doubting Santa's existence. An adwoman's lawyer boyfriend tries to prove that Macy's Santa Claus is the real thing.

Comic veteran Martin Short drops by his old New York stomping grounds when he hosts Saturday Night Live.

The musical performer is no slouch by the way; it's music icon Sir Paul McCartney. **(Global, NBC)**

Two animated classics abound with seasonal cheer and a little magic to inspire holiday grinches on Saturday. Tykes both naughty and nice would do well to tune into Santa Claus is Comin' To Town over on CTV, where a mailman explains why Santa has whiskers, lives at the North Pole and brings presents once a year. Meanwhile, The Legend of Frosty the Snowman unfolds over on YTV, where a new chapter in the saga revisits Frosty many years after he shouts out his first "Happy Birthday!" **(YTV)**

And then you have National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation on Sunday. By turns cheesy, garish and grating, it's also sweetly sentimental and a fun guilty pleasure. Who doesn't find Christmas light electrocutions hilarious? As head of the Griswold family, Chevy Chase offers plenty of pratfalls while Randy Quaid costars as a dickey-wearing country cousin with a little too much holiday spirit. **(CBC)**

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Chevy Chase stars as head of the Griswold family in National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation. HANDOUT

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Movie tells real-life rescue of horses from B.C. mountain

The Horses of McBride.

Snowmobilers worked tirelessly for four days to save the animals

LIZ BROWN
liz.brown@metronews.ca

Just before Christmas in 2008, Toni Jeck was faced with a tough decision. Armed with some hay and a shotgun, she was tasked with deciding the fate of two starving horses her snowmobiling brother had found trapped in two-metre deep snow on the side of Mount Renshaw, near McBride, B.C.

Despite finding the horses covered in bald patches and severely underweight, Jeck was convinced they could survive, if only she could get them off the mountain.

What followed was a four-day ordeal that warmed the hearts of Canadians as they watched a group of snowmobilers dig a trench more than a kilometre long, in minus 30 degree Celsius temperatures to free the horses, who — it was later discovered — had been abandoned there in the fall by a man on a hunting trip.

The story of the snowmobilers who could and the horses with the will to survive wasn't forgotten.

On Dec. 16, at 7 p.m. (ET/PT), CTV presents The Horses of McBride, starring Aidan Quinn, a TV movie based on the events of four years ago.

Actress Mackenzie Porter, who portrays Jeck in the movie, says she has trouble wrapping her head around the strength and willpower it must have taken to keep digging in sub-zero temperatures.

"I can't imagine it. Just the little amount of work we were doing to portray this story on film was exhausting. And I experienced nothing compared to what the Jeck family actually experienced," she says.

Filming for The Horses of McBride took place in the Kananaskis Valley, Alta., which mimicked some of the deep snow conditions the real rescuers faced. "I did a lot of shoveling, luckily I only had to do it when the camera was rolling" says Porter, laughing. "I got an amazing workout."

While the shoveling may have been tough for Porter, the work with the horses came naturally to the actress, who grew up on a ranch near Medicine Hat, Alta., and rode with her sister and dad.

Aside from horsemanship skills, Porter was also able to exercise her acting abilities alongside seasoned veteran Quinn, whose past films include Legends of the Fall.

"I'm a huge fan of his so I was excited when I heard he was on board for this film. He was just really grounded," she says. "The first day I met him he invited me to dinner to rehearse and just build that relationship with him. He's just this amazing person."

The Horses of McBride airs Dec. 16 at 7 p.m. ET/PT on CTV. HANDOUT

Rescued

Horses healthy and happy

The real horses — Belle and Sundance — are now healthy and happy living in adoptive homes. As such, the film crew had to find two equines that looked starving and unhealthy. Enter Lady and Slim, two emaciated horses from Alberta and British Columbia. As the filming went on, the wranglers involved were able to put weight back on these horses. Eventually, Lady was adopted by a couple who worked on the film, while Slim, once at a healthier weight, was returned to his original owner.

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Sean Penn

Penn delivers insight into romantic past

Two years after his divorce from Robin Wright, Sean Penn is opening up about their marriage — and his entire romantic history. "There is no shame in saying that we all want to be loved by someone. As I look back over my life in romance, I don't feel I've ever had that," he tells Esquire magazine. And while he doesn't mention Wright by name, he does discuss their split. "When you get divorced, all the truths come out, you sit there and go, 'What the f— was I doing? What was I doing believing that this person was invested in this way?'" he says. "Which is a fantastically strong humiliation in the best sense. It can make somebody very bitter and very hard and closed off, but I find it does the opposite to me."

Gabriel Aubry

Aubry in the clear over brawl with Martinez

Gabriel Aubry won't be facing criminal charges following his Thanksgiving day brawl with Olivier Martinez, the fiancé of ex-girlfriend Halle Berry, according to TMZ. In lieu of a formal hearing, the Los Angeles City Attorney is expected to hold an informal office meeting to discuss the altercation with Aubry, but the French-Canadian model won't have to worry about any further repercussions.

METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

The Word

30 Rock's Jenna films final fiery tantrum

THE WORD
Dorothy Robinson
scene@metronews.ca

Much to 30 Rock fans' chagrin, Jane Krakowski, a.k.a. Jenna on the hit show, is getting a little break for the holiday season now that the sitcom is currently filming their last-ever episode.

"It's a very busy time right now between wrapping up 30 Rock and being a relatively new mom, and we're having Christmas dinner at our house this year for the first time," she says at an event for Bank of America, which raised money for Feeding America.

"Hopefully it'll be good; we wanted to sort of bring the joy of Christmas to our home, so our whole family is coming over. It should be a nice day and a nice way to sort of start a new chapter with 30 Rock ending."

"Yesterday we shot Jenna's last temper tantrum; it was fantastic. They told me to go as far as I wanted to go and the entire crew applauded when it was over because everyone knew it was the last time Jenna would be insulting people and throwing things.

"It was very fun — incredibly satisfying."

Renee Zellweger ALL PHOTOS GETTY

Zellweger, it seems, has a new man in her life

Renee Zellweger apparently has a new man in her life. The actress was spotted at LAX airport smooching musician and producer Doyle Bramhall, who previously dated Sheryl Crow, according to Us Weekly. "They went to college together," a source says of the new couple. "It's going really well." Zellweger was last linked romantically to Bradley Cooper, but they split up in March 2011 after dating for less than two years.

Twitter

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Snark all you want hipsters, Billy Joel sounds great. The man's still got it.

@IJasonAlexander
Having a blast killing my poker pals at Brad Garrett's house. One more hand, I won this house.

@iamrashidajones
I love E.T. and still believe he is real.

@GarryShandling
Oh, let the Koreans have outer space.

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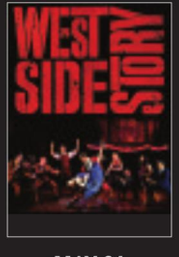

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YOU CAN BRING HOPE AND CHANGE

WITH GIFTS OF HOPE FROM PLAN CANADA

Thinking of giving your child's teachers or daycare employees a more meaningful gift this year?

If so, then maybe charitable gift giving is for you. It was for Ruth Pogue and her husband, Greg McLean, who opted to give their children's teachers Gifts of Hope through Plan Canada rather than yet another coffee mug and gift card. Gifts of Hope is Plan Canada's ethical gift giving program focused on bringing change and hope to communities in need.

"I was looking for something different to give," says the Calgary-based Pogue. "And I'd just received a Plan Canada catalogue for Gifts of Hope in the mail. I started thumbing through it and there were some great gifts in there for $25 to $30 so I started giving those at Christmastime to teachers."

For Pogue it was a way to give a gift with more impact — after all, Plan, a non-profit charity, reaches more than 90,000 communities and 174.2 million people around the world. "What I like about Plan is that a lot of their Gifts of Hope are providing solutions to people, be it water or nutrition or maternity clinics," Pogue adds. "So they're enduring gifts or opportunities to help on an ongoing basis."

That's the intention of these gifts, notes Jeff Cornett, Plan Canada's vice-president of donor marketing. "Whether it is clean water for a family, a mango tree for a classroom to teach children gardening skills, or a goat that will provide milk, nourishment, and a source of income for a family, these gifts create a real difference in the lives of children and can help lift entire communities out of poverty."

Ruth Pogue with her husband, Greg McLean.

PLAN CANADA PHOTO

Last year's enduring gift that Pogue selected was the peanut butter project, a gift that, for $35, helps provide a valuable source of protein for growing children, and supports local businesses as well. The gift funded women's peanut butter co-operatives whose work included processing the peanuts, and also provided them with training in business and marketing.

While the catalogue is available online at plangifts.com, you can also order the gifts by phone at 1-800-387-1418 or mail in the catalogue order form. And along with giving the gift, Plan also followed up and sent Pogue and fellow donors updates about how some of the projects were faring.

"With Plan Canada, I feel like there really is a plan," Pogue says.

"It's helping these communities to further themselves. You feel your money is going to something worthy."

MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD

When donating to charities, many of us pick a donation area that's significant to us. And it's the ability to direct donations that donors like Kathy Crowell enjoy when she purchases a Gift of Hope through the non-profit charity Plan Canada.

Gifts of Hope is Plan Canada's ethical gift giving program focused on bringing change and hope to communities in need.

"I've given my sister Gifts of Hope for the past few years as Christmas gifts," Crowell says.

"I've always given livestock as she is a true animal lover."

Gifts of Hope allow donors to direct funds and engage in Plan's key areas of work such as education, health, clean water, micro-finance and livelihood, and disaster and emergency response.

Many of Plan Canada's gifts also have a donation matching system in which contributions can be matched with a donation from generous funding partners. For example, a $70 donation to provide maternity beds and supplies has a 6-to-1 match ratio, meaning a $70 donation actually ends up having a value of $490.

While a number of Gifts of Hope continue to be popular — such as a mango trees ($15 each, 10 for $120), classroom essentials ($17 for one child, $250 for an entire classroom) to even purchasing a goat ($75 each, $775/herd), which can help provide income and food for families — this year, Plan Canada has also added a number of new gifts. These include: Newborn checkup ($12); help orphaned children affected by HIV ($75); build and stock a school kitchen ($500); and more.

Kathy Crowell in the Virunga mountains with students who are learning a traditional dance.

PLAN CANADA PHOTO

"In addition, this year anyone who purchases a Gift of Hope will be entered to win a trip to Tanzania in 2013 to see Gifts of Hope in action," says Jeff Cornett, Plan Canada's vice-president of donor marketing.

That's what Crowell had a chance to do last year when she travelled to Rwanda through the organization.

"We were able to see the school that was being built, a clinic, a livestock co-op and a micro-financing project," she says.

"Plan Canada is truly making a difference in the world — these Gifts of Hope work. My experience in Rwanda was life-changing."

FIVE GIFTS FOR LESS THAN $50

Here are five gifts less than $50 you can get through Plan Canada's Gifts of Hope program.

NEWBORN CHECKUP ($12): To help support workers who visit moms and their newborns in the first three days of the baby's birth, this kind of checkup can help improve infant mortality rates.

3 BABY CHICKS ($17): Once they start laying eggs, chickens become an instant source of income, often for women. They are also an important teaching tool for young girls to learn livestock management skills.

GIRLS' HYGIENE ESSENTIALS ($25): This gift is essential and can be handed out in critical times such as war/conflict or a natural disaster.

ANTI-MALARIA BED NETS ($30): These nets are locally made and can cover an entire family to help prevent the spread of malaria.

ENDLESS HARVEST ($40): An all-in-one gift that provides gardening essentials such as seeds, tools and training in pest control and farm management.

EMERGENCY ESSENTIALS ($50): For natural disasters or emergencies of any kind, this gift allows Plan to get into a crisis zone fast to help distribute clean water, tarps, high-energy food rations, hygiene supplies and more.

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HOLIDAY 2012
gift guide

Kindle Keyboard 3G — $189 | Kobo Glo — $129.99 | Sony Reader — $139.99 | Kobo Mini — $79.99

Yule love these e-readers

MIKE YAWNEY
For Metro

It's hard to believe just a few years ago e-books were only for the tech savvy. Now, avid readers, commuters and travellers are frequently seen carrying these handy devices.

They are much lighter than a paperback and can store thousands of titles. Here are a few of the best e-readers for your loved one.

Sony Reader — $139.99
Sony has changed the design of its latest e-reader, dropping a few features like the headphone jack, but the end result is a more affordable device. With a dedicated public library button, Sony makes it easy to download books from your local library.

Kobo Glo — $129.99
The perfect e-reader for those who like to read in bed. The Kobo Glo has an adjustable illuminated screen so you can read in any lighting condition. Expandable memory allows for an additional 32GB of storage, basically allowing for more than 30,000 titles to fit on your device.

Kindle Paperwhite — 139.99 US
If you are planning a trip to the U.S. you might want to pick up this new e-reader from Amazon (available in select box stores). Like the Glo, the Kindle Paperwhite has an illuminated screen but with higher resolution and contrast. It's light and has a battery capable of lasting eight weeks on a single charge. There is a cheaper version of Paperwhite with ads (Amazon calls these "special offers"), so if this will annoy you make sure you get the "Without Special Offers" model. Also available with 3G for those who like to travel.

Kobo Mini — $79.99
The world's smallest and lightest e-reader. You can actually fit the Kobo Mini in your pocket. Despite its palm-sized footprint, this device has the regular features of a larger Kobo, complete with anti-glare screen and long battery life. Perfect for those who read on the go.

Kindle Keyboard 3G — $189
This older model of Amazon's popular e-reader is available in select Canadian stores. It may be one of the originals, but it remains a favourite for those who like downloading on the go. The 3G connectivity means you can download new titles anywhere you have cell reception at no additional charge. The built-in keyboard is great for those who hate touchscreen typing.

Kindle Paperwhite — 139.99 US

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From Brampton, WIND Customer since January 2011

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Best books for the ladies on your list

HEATHER BUCHAN
For Metro

A roundup of the top five books that are sure to engross the women on your Christmas 2012 gift list — and two stocking-stuffer suggestions.

Fifty Shades Trilogy

E. L. James, $47.85, Knopf Doubledy Publishing Group, Paperback Box Set.

The three-volume paperback boxed set of the New York Times #1 bestselling trilogy includes Fifty Shades of Grey, Fifty Shades Darker and Fifty Shades Freed.

Dear Life

Alice Munro, $32.99, McClelland & Stewart, Hardcover.

The award-winning author illumines the moment a life is shaped — the moment a dream, or sex or a twist of fate turns a person out of her accustomed path and into another way of being — with stories set in the area around Lake Ontario where Munro herself lives.

Flight Behavior

Barbara Kingsolver, $31.99, HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., Hardcover.

Set in present-day rural Tennessee, this novel tells the story of Dellarobia Turnbow, a restless young farmwife who, after years of isolation and boredom, finds her path in life suddenly opening out.

Let's Pretend This Never Happened: (A Mostly True Memoir)

Jenny Lawson, $27.50, Penguin USA, Hardcover.

Blogging sensation Jenny Lawson takes readers on a hilarious journey recalling her bizarre upbringing in Texas, her awkward high school years and her relationship with her long-suffering husband. The premise: The most mortifying moments of our lives are the ones that define us.

Inside

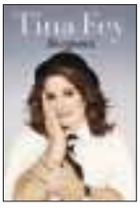
Alix Ohlin, $22.95, House of Anansi Press Inc., Paperback.

Shortlisted for the Scotiabank Giller Prize and the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize, the book follows four compelling and complex characters from Montreal, New York, Hollywood and Rwanda, and explores the dangers and imperatives of making ourselves available to, and responsible for, those dearest to us.

Bossypants

Tina Fey, $17.50, Little, Brown and Company, Paperback.

With frank humour, Fey tells her life story — from her early days as a nerd to landing on Saturday Night Live to becoming a mom. As the book's description says:



Tina Fey reveals all, and proves what we've all suspected: You're no one until someone calls you bossy. (Includes Special, Never-Before-Solicited Opinions on Breastfeeding, Princesses, Photoshop, the Electoral Process and Italian Rum Cake!).

The Imposter Bride

Nancy Richler, $17.99, HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., Paperback.

The story centres on Lily Azerov, a young woman arriving in postwar Montreal to meet her betrothed. But Lily is not who she claims to be. Who is Lily? And whose identity did she steal?

Try these titles for your teenaged book-lovers

HEATHER BUCHAN
For Metro

Here, a selection of the best books to leave under the Christmas tree, or in a stocking, for those hard-to-buy-for teens in your life this holiday season.

All of the books are also available as eBooks.

Beautiful Redemption

Kami Garcia, $21, Little Brown Books for Young Readers, Hardcover.

The fourth and final book in the Beautiful Creatures series is filled with plot twists that'll keep teen readers turning the pages.

The book follows the journey of small-town teen Ethan Wate who falls in love with Lena Duchannes, a girl with supernatural powers that unveil a secretive and cursed side to Ethan's hometown. It's been declared a spellbinding love story.

The Diviners

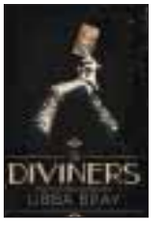
Libba Bray, $24, Little Brown Books for Young Readers, Hardcover.

This supernatural thriller set in Jazz Age New York centres on Evangeline O'Neill, a 17-year-old from small town Ohio who is sent to live with her uncle in Manhattan. Adventure ensues. This book is the first instalment in a series.

The Perks of Being a Wallflower

Stephen Chbosky, $12, MTV Books, Paperback.

A critically acclaimed coming-of-age novel, narrated by "Charlie" — a shy and introverted teen who writes a series of letters to an anonymous person describing various scenes in his life — explores topics of sexuality, introversion, drugs and the awkwardness of adolescence.



Diary of a Wimpy Kid

Jeff Kinney, $13, Harry N. Abrams, Hardcover.

The first in a series of innovatively illustrated books of the same name, this realistic fiction novel about a boy named Greg Heffley and his struggles in middle school was named a New York Times bestseller when it was released in hardcover in 2007.

Tilt

Ellen Hopkins, $22, Margaret K. McElderry Books, Hardcover.

A riveting novel from New York Times bestselling author Ellen Hopkins follows three teens whose stories are interconnected through their parents' family relationships.

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Hit all the right notes

Ambiance. Music from these MP3 players and accessories can add to holiday atmosphere

Soundfreaq Sound Kick — $99.99

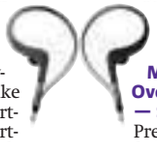
MIKE YAWNEY
For Metro

Music can invigorate, relax, and inspire. It's no wonder so many choose to share the gift of music during the holidays. Here are the best MP3 related gifts you can put under the tree.

iPod Touch — $299 and up
All the features of an iPhone without the actual phone. Apple's iPod Touch remains one of the best MP3 players on the market, probably due to the fact you can do so much with it. Play games, download apps, or video chat with loved ones. The new stylish design and retina screen ensure this will be a hit on Christmas morning.

Samsung Galaxy Player 4.2 — $179.99
A device for those who prefer Android over Apple. The Galaxy Player puts everything you like about Android smartphones into a small portable device minus the monthly fees. Music, apps, camera … it's all here, including FM radio!

Belkin Bluetooth Music Receiver — $49.95
Play music from your Bluetooth-enabled devices through your home stereo or standalone speakers — wirelessly. This tiny device will work with any speaker or stereo as long as it has an "aux in" port. Despite its small size, it transmits up to 33 feet away and will remember up to six paired devices.



Monster Inspiration Over-Ear Headphones — $349.99
Premium headphones for the audiophile in your life. These noise-cancelling headphones feature exceptional music production with ultra-comfortable ear cushions for extended wear. Remote and microphone cables come included so you can take calls on your smartphone without missing a beat. You can also swap out the headband for a more personalized look.

Soundfreaq Sound Kick — $99.99
Great sound without breaking the bank. This portable Bluetooth speaker not only gives you seven hours of play on a single charge, it also features a USB port so you can charge your MP3 player or smartphone. Brilliant!

Sony XBA Balanced Armature Sports Earbuds — $99.99
Ideal for those who listen to music while working out. These earbuds are not only sweat-resistant, they are waterproof, meaning you can wash them to ensure they are clean and ready for your next workout. Washing your MP3 player, however, isn't recommended.

SiriusXM Lynx — $299.99
A satellite radio receiver like no other. Listen to SiriusXM in your vehicle or in your home via Wi-Fi. This small, stylish receiver allows you to pause, rewind and record satellite radio, stream to Bluetooth speakers in your home, or play your own MP3s thanks to a built-in memory card slot. This is also the first satellite radio receiver to feature a high-definition touchscreen.

Clockwise, from top, iPod Touch — $299 and up, SiriusXM Lynx — $299.99, Belkin Bluetooth Music Receiver — $49.95, Sony XBA Balanced Armature Sports Earbuds — $99.99, Samsung Galaxy Player 4.2 — $179.99.

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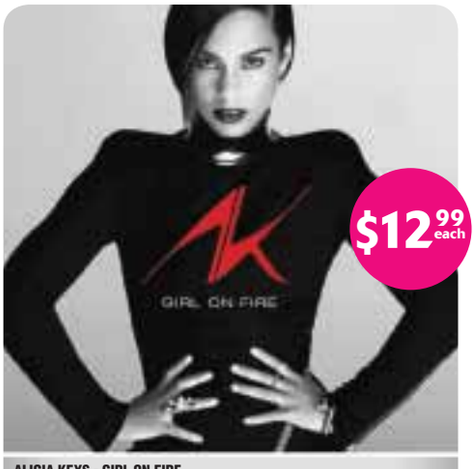

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Books that will keep him hooked

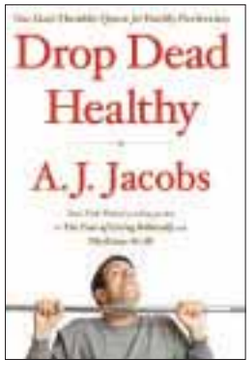
HEATHER BUCHAN
For Metro

A rundown of the top books that are sure to engross any man on your gift list this Christmas.

The Racketeer

John Grisham, Random House, $28.95, Paperback.

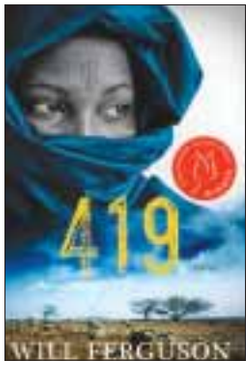
In this wickedly clever new novel from the master of the legal thriller, judge Raymond Fawcett is found dead in his remote lakeside cabin and one man, Malcolm Bannister, a.k.a. the Racketeer, knows who killed the federal judge and why.



Drop Dead Healthy: One Man's Humble Quest for Bodily Perfection

A.J. Jacobs, Simon & Schuster, $18.99, Paperback.

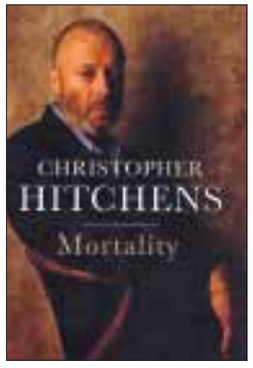
Jacobs, editor-at-large at Esquire magazine, explores every aspect of the body in this New York Times Bestseller and, over the course of two years, subjects himself to a grueling yet entertaining regimen of exercise, diets and experiments in his quest to makeover his body and become the healthiest person in the world. Part memoir, part adventure, part how-to manual, the book is not only informative and inspiring but a tremendously good laugh.



419

Will Ferguson, Penguin Group Canada, $20, Paperback.

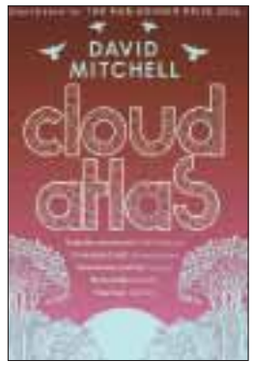
Winner of the 2012 Scotia-Bank Giller Prize, this novel is described as both epic in its sweep and intimate in its portrayal of human endurance. Author Ferguson, an internationally bestselling travel writer, takes readers deep into the labyrinth of lies that is the world's most insidious Internet scam. It all begins with an email: "Dear Sir, I am the daughter of a Nigerian diplomat and I need your help."



Mortality

Christopher Hitchens, McClelland & Stewart, $22.99, Hardcover.

Based on award-winning columnist Hitchens' columns in Vanity Fair that chronicled his year-and-a-half battle with esophageal cancer, Mortality is the writer's most honest and reflective. Throughout the course of his ordeal, which ended with his death in 2011, Hitchens bravely refused the solace of religion, preferring to confront death with both eyes open.



Cloud Atlas

David Mitchell, Knopf Canada, $24.95, Paperback.

In this captivating 2004 novel (from which the current science fiction drama starring Halle Berry and Tom Hanks was adapted), award-winning British author David Mitchell erases the boundaries of language, genre and time to offer a meditation on humanity's dangerous will to power.

Whirl Away: Stories

Russell Wangersky, Thomas Allen Publishers, $21.95, Paperback.

This collection of short fiction from an award-winning writer looks at what happens when people's personal coping skills go awry.

Turn your party into a Hope event

ASTRID VAN DEN BROEK
For Metro

Looking to do something meaningful this time of year?

While you could collect food for your local food bank or sign up to serve a holiday meal to the homeless, you could also turn your annual holiday open house into a Hosting for Hope event.

Hosting for Hope, which is a partnership initiative between the Canadian Women's Foundation and HomeSense, is a national event in which your party, brunch, lunch, tea or any other holiday party this season can be turned into a fundraiser for local women's shelters and violence prevention programs.

"We're hoping that Canadians, who will already be throwing parties this season regardless, could register their party at hostingforhope.ca and then ask the guests to make a donation instead of bringing a bottle of wine," says Tamara Robbins Griffith, public relations manager for Toronto-based HomeSense.

Hosting for Hope is a partnership initiative between the Canadian Women's Foundation and HomeSense. CONTRIBUTED

Those hosting the parties register with a $50 contribution to the initiative and from there they can send e-vites, messages and post pictures of their event. In turn, HomeSense will send a $25 thank you gift card to the host.

The site is also home for a number of party planning tips — such as how to dress up your powder room for the event, to ideas for a good party playlist, and on the flipside, also allows you to find a shelter near you where your money would go as well as detailing exactly how your donation will be spent.

This is the first year of the initiative and Robbins Griffith hopes it'll prove successful and turn into an annual event.

"We're trying to make it as easy as possible," adds Robbins Griffith. "This is a way to feel really good about the consumerism of the season. It's not a big ask and it will make people feel really good while having fun."

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Home for the holidays with singer Paul Brandt

Christmas traditions. Country superstar shares why this time of the year is special to him and his family

DAN CLAPSON
life@metronews.ca

Taking a break from promoting his new album, Just as I am, Paul Brandt — Canadian country music star, husband and father of two — shares some of his favourite things about the Christmas season.

He also offers a simple recipe that's sure to be a hit at your next holiday party.

What's your favourite part about spending the holidays with your family?
I'm often overwhelmed with gratitude for my family and our relationships during Christmas. Moments when we can just be together, celebrating, singing, eating and giving gifts to each other are so precious to me.

Do you have any family traditions that take place on Christmas Day?
A mandarin orange being in the toe of our Christmas stockings. The orange has to be eaten, and stockings emptied, before we can move on to the presents.

Are you pretty hands-on in the kitchen while making the holiday dinner?
I like being hands-on, but my mom and mother-in-law do the majority of the work for the big family dinners. I will happily jump in and carve the turkey... and maybe reserve a choice piece or two for myself as payment for my services.

Do people ever request an impromptu mini-Christmas concert in December? Do you have a favourite holiday song to sing?
I am often asked to sing around Christmas ... and I don't know why, but one of my favourites to sing has always been I'll Be Home For Christmas. Probably one of the most depressing Christmas songs ever, but I love crooning it.

Paul Brandt loves the holiday spirit. Fruit Cake? Not so much. SUBMITTED

Fruitcake. Love it or hate it?
Is "loathe" too strong a word?

What is the one thing in your life that really makes the holidays complete?
For me, the Christmas season is all about my faith. This faith perspective during the holidays reminds me to go out of my way to think about and help others, and when I do, I feel like the holidays really come together for me in a special and always memorable way.

Paul's Pickled Shrimp

When Paul Brandt has guests during the holiday season, he serves up this easy to make Pickled Shrimp appetizer.

Ingredients

- 1-2 bags cooked frozen shrimp
- onions, sliced thinly
- several bay leaves
- 1 cup olive oil
- 3/4 cup white vinegar
- 3 tbsp capers with juice
- 2 1/2 tsp celery deed
- 1 1/2 tsp salt
- 6 drops Tabasco sauce
- Juice of 2 lemons

1. Thaw shrimp under cool water and drain. Layer shrimp, onion and bay leaves in shallow dish. Combine remaining ingredients and pour over shrimp. Cover and chill 24 hours. **RECIPE BY PAUL BRANDT**

Liquid Assets

Glass full of holiday spirit

LIQUID ASSETS
Peter Rockwell
@therealwineguy
liquidassets@eastlink.ca

Though it took a few bottles of bubbly and repeat viewings of A Charlie Brown Christmas, I've finally found my holiday spirit.

While I'm sure some of you will have an alternative to turkey as the star of your Xmas meal, the big bird is it for the majority of us, so this week I'm focusing on white wines to match.

Roast turkey never makes an appearance in the dining room alone. And it's all of the side dishes (like cranberry sauce, herbaceous stuffing and sweet potatoes) that have the greatest chance of clashing with your wine choice.

An off-dry white made with the peppery gewürztraminer grape or medium-dry riesling grape from any country is a great pick. So is one made with sauvignon blanc from France.

I'm partial to a lightly oaked chardonnay. The majority of white French Burgundy wines fit the bill, as do many chards from Australia, Chile, Canada and California.

The 2010 J. Lohr Riverstone Chardonnay ($18.95 - $22.99) used to be an oak bomb, but recent vintages have seen it transformed into a mouth full of tropical fruit with butterscotch aromatics and a subtle, turkey-friendly tone of wood.

Next week, the reds. **PRICES REFLECT THE RANGE ACROSS THE COUNTRY. SOME PRODUCTS MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE IN ALL PROVINCES.**

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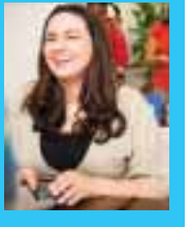

Have a few gaps in your schedule you're looking to fill?
Whether you're hoping to dance, drink or just relax, check out these hot upcoming events.

MIX OF SIX
Julian Uzielli
london@metronews.ca

Big Band Christmas

In the mood for dancing but sick of clubs? You might want to check out Aeolian Hall (795 Dundas St. E) tonight. The Prime Time Big Band is playing, and with the Aeolian's seating removed to make way for a dance floor it's expected to be a night of full-fledged swing dancing straight out of the 1940s. Guest vocalist Gina Farrugia, who has been singing jazz for 18 years, will join the 18-member band in a set that will feature classic swing tunes and Christmas songs. Tickets are $30 at the door. Doors open at 7 p.m. Photo courtesy of Gina Farrugia.

The Nutcracker

For two days only this weekend, the Palace Theatre (710 Dundas St. E) is showing a performance of Tchaikovsky's The Nutcracker, the celebrated Christmas-season ballet that tells the story of a little girl's dream journey through a fantastical dream world with a handsome prince, and her adventures along the way. The production is presented by the Dance Steps company. Shows are at 1 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. For tickets, call 519-432-1029 or visit palacetheatre.ca. Photo courtesy of Fred's Photography.

War photography

Photography enthusiasts and news junkies alike are in for a treat tonight, when local photojournalist John Densky will be at a gallery opening of his work at the Medium Gallery (870 Dundas St. E). Densky has spent the past decade covering a large part of West Africa, and spent three months in Syria this summer shooting for The Guardian and Time Magazine. Densky will be on hand at the event, which starts at 7 p.m. Pictured: Syrian rebel fighters near the northern border with Turkey. Photo by John Densky.

Golden Ink

The winter solstice may be coming on, but not everything has to be dark and dreary. To celebrate the changing of the seasons, Golden Axe Tattoo (120 York St.) and the Nite Owl (353 Talbot St.) are teaming up to co-host The Winter Solstice Art Show, showcasing the best in local tattoo art talent. Tonight is opening night for the show, which is occurring simultaneously at both locations. There will be original pieces and prints for sale, and there will be several artists in attendance. The show runs until January 14. Photo courtesy of Lindsay Hibbard.

Snip Snip

Tomorrow night, Welland punk band The Snips will be at Call The Office (216 York St.), with local openers Radio Delete. After playing together for several years, The Snips released their first full-length, Highs of Low, in August. If you're hoping to pick up a copy at the show, you might get one for free — there will also be a canned food drive that night, and for every non-perishable item you donate your name will be entered into a draw for free merchandise from the bands. Doors open at 9 p.m. Admission is $5 at the door, 19+. Photo courtesy of Mat Breton.

Arrogant Worms

Musical comedy group the Arrogant Worms are playing at Aeolian Hall (795 Dundas St. E) tomorrow night. The three-piece band had humble beginnings as a comedy show on the Queen's University radio station in the early '90s, and has gone on to widespread acclaim. They are known for their stage banter just as much as their music — audiences of all ages won't be disappointed. Tickets are $25 in advance and $30 at the door ($20 for students), and available at aeolianhall.ca. Photo courtesy of Darin Addison.

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PLU 71366

Grapefruit Coriander Mussels. Add a punch of citrus to this appetizer

Ingredients

2 portions

- 2 tbsp (25 ml) butter
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/3 cup (75 ml) chopped fresh coriander
- 1 tsp (5 ml) ground cumin
- 1 cup (250 ml) Florida grapefruit juice
- Half red bell pepper, diced
- 1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced
- 1 bag (about 2 lbs/1 kg) fresh mussels, rinsed

1. In large saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Cook onion, garlic, half of the coriander and cumin for about 3 minutes or until softened. Add juice, red pepper and jalapeno; bring to the boil.

2. Stir in mussels. Cover and cook for about 10 minutes or until mussels are open.

3. Sprinkle with remaining coriander before serving.

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Reason to cheer for prolonged lockout

World juniors. Canadian squad should be most talented in years, assuming NHL labour dispute continues

Nathan MacKinnon, left, from Cole Harbour, N.S., and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, from Burnaby, B.C., chat at selection camp in Calgary on Wednesday. Both MacKinnon and his Halifax Mooseheads teammate Jonathan Drouin cracked the Canadian roster as 17-year-olds. JEFF MCINTOSH/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Mark Scheifele, Jonathan Huberdeau. Not bad for a first line. With Dougie Hamilton and Morgan Rielly as the top defence pairing. And probably Malcolm Subban in net.

Coach Steve Spott has picked his talent-loaded team — the 23 players who will represent Canada at the world junior hockey championship in Russia — after a bullet-quick training camp.

Now he can only hope he can keep the team together.

The NHL lockout — or, the possibility that the lockout could end before the tournament is over — haunts him.

How worried is he? "On a scale of one to 10," he said. "Fourteen."

There's a very real risk that one, two or more of his players could be called to their NHL camp if the lockout ends. If they're called before midnight Dec. 25 — the deadline for handing in his roster — they can be replaced. If they're called after, Team Canada would play undermanned.

And it's the team's best players — Nugent-Hopkins (by Edmonton), Huberdeau (by Florida), Hamilton (by Boston) — who are the highest risk of being called back.

Some teams have pledged to Hockey Canada to allow their players to stay through the end of the tournament: The Leafs (Rielly), the Blues (Jordan Binnington, Ty Rattie), the Blue Jackets (Boone Jenner) and Penguins (Scott Harrington of the London Knights).

Scheifele has told the media that the Jets would let him stay, but the Jets have not told Hockey Canada that.

It may come down to public pressure for teams — especially Canadian teams — to leave their players in the tournament.

"We know exactly what we're dealing with," said Scott Salmond, Hockey Canada's senior director of operations.

"I would say it's just like an injury. If someone gets injured between the time we leave for Europe and the time the tournament starts, we can replace those guys. Unfortunately, obviously, it's going to be some of our best players. We've got great depth. We'll just have to call other guys in and some other guys will have to step up."

Plan B is to call back players from among the eight released Thursday evening: Goalie Laurent Brossoit, defencemen Frankie Corrado, Ryan Sproul and Matt Dumba and forwards Daniel Catenacci, Tom Wilson, Mark McNeill and Hunter Shinkaruk.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Quoted

"If that was to happen, we have a plan in place to be able to deal with it."

Hockey Canada senior director of operations Scott Salmond on the possibility of losing some top Canadians in the event of a resolution to the NHL lockout

Sweet 17

Halifax Mooseheads duo Nathan MacKinnon and Jonathan Drouin have cracked the Canadian roster as 17-year-olds.

- The inclusion of the pair is significant because the NHL lockout made all the country's top 19-year-old talent available.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NHL

League, NHLPA meet face-to-face

Two days of talks between the NHL, the players' association, and federal mediators still haven't provided any answers for how to end the lockout.

Representatives from the fighting sides made it into the same room with a federal mediator Thursday. They just didn't make noticeable progress. Players' association special counsel Steve Fehr, who met with league lead counsel Bob Batterman on Thursday, said the sides intend to talk Friday in person or by phone. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

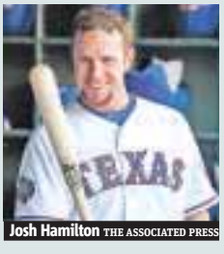
MLB

Hamilton heading west to Rangers' rivals in California

Josh Hamilton is heading to the Los Angeles Angels, lured with a $125-million US, five-year contract that steps up the migration of high-profile stars to Southern California.

The Angels persuaded the free-agent outfielder to leave the Texas Rangers with their third big-money off-season signing in as many years. Hamilton heads to Anaheim after first baseman Albert Pujols came west for $240 million last December along with pitcher C.J. Wilson — Hamilton's Texas teammate — for $77.5 million.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Josh Hamilton THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bills' Spiller has running game to himself

Buffalo running back C.J. Spiller, right, will be carrying the load for the Bills now that co-starter Fred Jackson is injured. BILL WIPPERT/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The only thing C.J. Spiller was running out of in Buffalo was the patience needed to answer the near-weekly round of questions of why he wasn't more involved in the Bills offence.

"Pretty much, because, I don't know what else you all want me to say," Spiller said. "I can only carry the ball when my number's called."

Spiller should get accustomed to hearing his No. 28 called far more often over the final three games.

That's because "Spiller Time" has finally arrived after co-starting running back Fred Jackson was placed on the season-ending injured reserve Tuesday because of a sprained right knee.

Spiller doesn't enjoy the circumstances behind why he'll be getting more playing time. And yet, he's up to the challenge as Buffalo (5-8) prepares to "host" the Seattle Seahawks (8-5) in Toronto on Sunday.

By the numbers

6.55

With 944 yards on 144 carries, C.J. Spiller is averaging 6.55 yards per run. That's the NFL's highest total through 13 games since 1963, when Hall of Famer Jim Brown averaged 6.61 yards per carry with the Cleveland Browns.

"I'm not necessarily eager. I'm just eager to try to see what I can do to try to help us win," Spiller said. "It's time for every playmaker on this team to rise up a little bit, including myself. So I definitely have to take it to another notch."

Spiller insists he has nothing to prove to anyone whether he's getting 20-plus carries or just seven as happened in a loss to St. Louis last weekend.

He has been the Bills' most dynamic threat this season. Spiller leads the team with five touchdowns rushing and is on the verge of his first 1,000-yard season.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
If you can no longer see the point of something then there is no reason why you should go on wasting time on it. Turn your attention towards more interesting things today, such as your social life and travel.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
No matter how many times you have bet against the odds and won in the past, you are unlikely to fare so well today. Err on the side of caution. Both in your personal life and in your work, you must play it safe.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
You seem reluctant to commit yourself to a plan or project that on most other occasions would appeal to you. Most likely your sixth sense is trying to tell you that it's too dangerous to get involved. Heed its warning.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
There is a danger that you will push yourself too hard and burn yourself out. Save as much of your physical, mental and emotional energy as you can today and over the weekend. You'll need it early next week.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
What would you do if you knew that you could not fail? Cosmic activity in the sympathetic sign of Sagittarius indicates that your dreams really will come true — if you have the courage to reach for them.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Your main task over the next 24 hours is to find a positive outlet for all the emotional energy that has been building up inside you. Activities of a physical nature are an especially good way to let off steam.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
It never hurts to let those you love know how much you care for them and you will get the chance to do that today and over the weekend. What you give out now will come back to you later many times over.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 2 04 - Nov. 22
The planets suggest the efforts you make now will pay off in a big way around the middle part of next week. The powers that be have not forgotten you, but it doesn't hurt to remind them what you can do.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
You will fight with all your powers to get what it is you desire today and you won't take no for an answer. Your rivals will sense how serious you are and, for the most part, move aside rather than take you on.

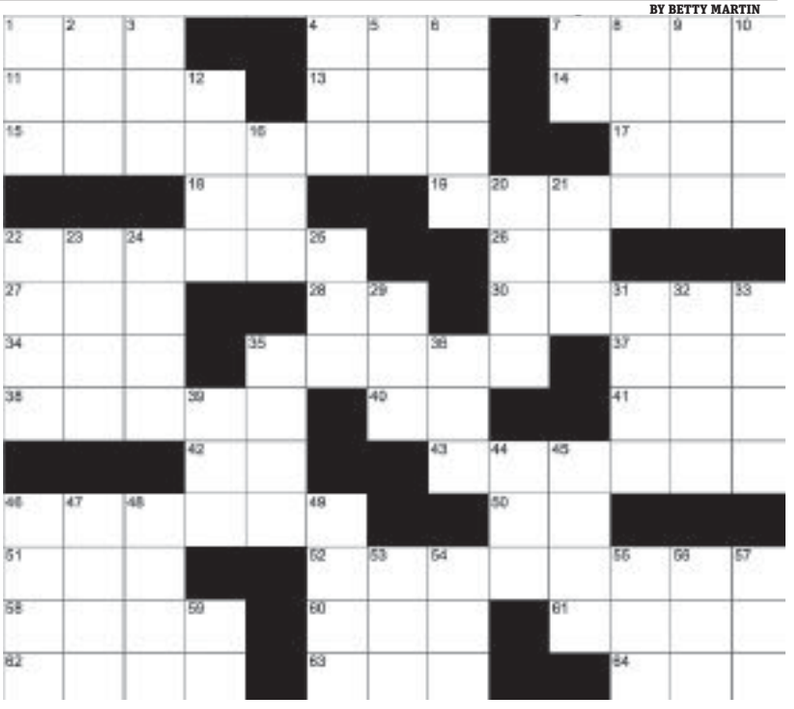
♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Your career plans are more likely to succeed if you keep your aims to yourself, at least for the next few days. The more you let rivals know what it is you desire, the easier you make it for them to deny you.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
You may have a different outlook and a different way of doing things to a colleague but ultimately you share the same goal, so find ways you can work together. Your differences can make you both stronger and more effective.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
What happens today and over the weekend will open your eyes to new possibilities and make you realize how much more is possible. Banish negative thinking in all its forms — there's no need for it at all. **SALLY BROMPTON**

Crossword

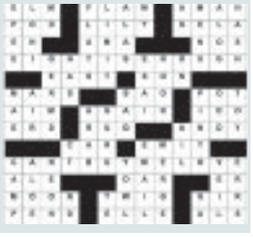
BY BETTY MARTIN



Across
1. When Paris sizzles
4. Provoke
7. Red Muppet
11. Peeples and Vardalos
13. Actress — Dawn Chong
14. — to Avonlea
15. Trigger
17. The Plastic — Band
18. Sha – Na
19. Decent
22. Scope
26. – lieu of
27. Summer attire
28. – Elsewhere
30. Geeks
34. Ortiz of Ugly Betty
35. Garden pest
37. Important time
38. Elegant shop
40. Modern Family actor
41. Ziering of Beverly Hills, 90210
42. Providence state
43. Citrus fruit
46. Anderson of Baywatch
50. Plural suffix
51. Exist
52. Like some brides
58. Irritate
60. Cartoon shriek
61. Lake near Buffao
62. Darrin's boss on Bewitched
63. Trash bag closer
64. Right angle shape

Down
1. Disney doe
2. Spasm
3. Snack
4. Writer Levin
5. Alley rodent
6. Hang on to
7. Night time drama starring Noah Wyle
8. Noose
9. Lion's locks
10. Smell
12. Without
16. Moving vehicle
20. Coat that gets tossed
21. — Life to Live
22. Airport postings, for short
23. Princess warrior of TV
24. Shade of blue
25. Recipe abbr.
29. What's — use?
31. Harness strap
32. Trail
33. Lucid
35. Shrub
36. Wedding words
39. Mineral
44. Matter, in law
45. Tennis great Arthur
46. Actor's quest
47. Diva's solo
48. Thaw
49. Promote, as criminal intent
53. Flower garland
54. Hawaiian instrument (abbr.)
55. Tick off
56. Zip
57. Harden
59. Star of CHiPs (init.)

Yesterday's Crossword



What's online

See today's answers metronews.ca/answers.

Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

	9		8				3	
			7				8	4
		4	6		9	5	2	
	5	7						
2								6
						1	9	
	1	2	5		3	7		
7	8				4			
	6				1		5	

Yesterday's Sudoku

3	5	8	2	9	4	6	7	1
4	2	1	7	8	6	3	5	9
6	7	9	1	3	5	2	4	8
7	8	5	4	2	1	9	6	3
9	4	2	6	7	3	8	1	5
1	6	3	9	5	8	4	2	7
2	1	7	8	4	9	5	3	6
8	3	6	5	1	2	7	9	4
5	9	4	3	6	7	1	8	2

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